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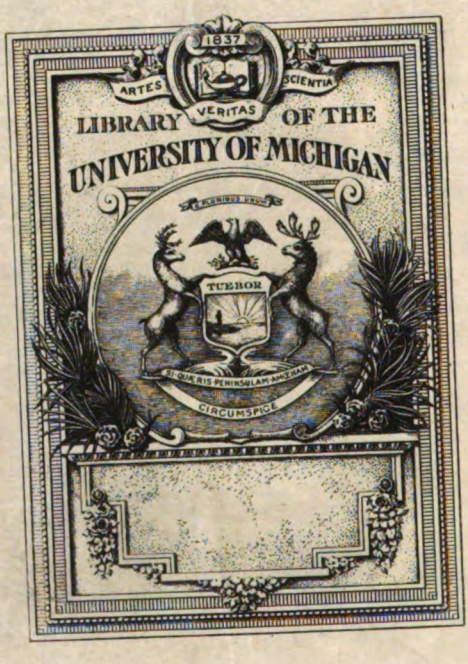
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An Illustrated Monthly

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for July, 1926.

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Frontispiece: "N-n-n-n-nice weather," said George. "Glad you like it," said the stranger. "I ordered it specially."

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The characters and names in the stories in "The Strand Magazine" are entirely imaginary and have no reference to real persons.

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JULY, 1926.

"N-N-N-N-NICE WEATHER," SAID GEORGE.
"GLAD YOU LIKE IT," SAID THE STRANGER. "I ORDERED IT SPECIALLY."

(See page 6.)

The Truth About George

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

TWO men were sitting in the bar-parlour of the little fishing inn as I entered it; and one of them, I gathered from his low, excited voice and wide gestures, was telling the other a story. I could hear nothing but an occasional "Biggest I ever saw in my life!" and "Fully as large as that!" but in such a place it was not difficult to imagine the rest; and when the second man, catching my eye, winked at me with a sort of humorous misery, I smiled sympathetically back at him.

The action had the effect of establishing a bond between us; and when the story-teller finished his tale and left, the other came over to my table as if answering a formal invitation.

"Dreadful liars some men are," he said.

"Fishermen," I suggested, "are traditionally careless of the truth."

"He wasn't a fisherman," said my companion. "That was our local doctor. He was telling me about his latest case of dropsy. Besides"—he tapped me earnestly on the knee—"you must not fall into the popular error about fishermen. Tradition has maligned them. I am a fisherman myself, and I have never told a lie in my life."

I could well believe it. He was a short, stout, comfortable man of middle age, and the thing that struck me first about him was the extraordinarily childlike candour of his eyes. They were large and round and honest. I would have bought oil stock from him without a tremor.

The door leading into the white dusty road opened, and a small man with rimless pince-nez and an anxious expression shot in like a rabbit and had consumed a gin and ginger-beer almost before we knew he was there. Having thus refreshed himself, he stood looking at us, seemingly ill at ease.

"N-n-n-n-n-n——" he said.

We looked at him inquiringly.

"N-n-n-n-n-n-ice d-d-d-d——"

His nerve appeared to fail him, and he vanished as abruptly as he had come.

"I think he was leading up to telling us that it was a nice day," hazarded my companion.

"It must be very embarrassing," I said, "for a man with such a painful impediment in his speech to open conversation with strangers."

"Probably trying to cure himself. Like my nephew George. Have I ever told you about my nephew George?"

I reminded him that we had only just met, and that this was the first time I had learned that he had a nephew George.

"Young George Mulliner. My name is Mulliner. I will tell you about George's case—in many ways a rather remarkable one."

MY nephew George (said Mr. Mulliner) was as nice a young fellow as you would ever wish to meet, but from childhood up he had been cursed with a terrible stammer. If he had had to earn his living, he would undoubtedly have found this affliction a great handicap, but fortunately his father had left him a comfortable income; and George spent a not unhappy life, residing in the village where he had been born and passing his days in the usual country sports and his evenings in doing cross-word puzzles. By the time he was thirty he knew more about Eli, the prophet, Ra, the Sun God, and the bird Emu than anybody else in the county

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except Susan Blake, the vicar's daughter, who had also taken up the solving of cross-word puzzles and was the first girl in Worcestershire to find out the meaning of "stearine" and "crepuscular."

It was his association with Miss Blake that first turned George's thoughts to a serious endeavour to cure himself of his stammer. Naturally, with this hobby in common, the young people saw a great deal of one another: for George was always looking in at the vicarage to ask her if she knew a word of seven letters meaning "appertaining to the profession of plumbing," and Susan was just as constant a caller at George's cosy little cottage—being frequently stumped, as girls will be, by words of eight letters signifying "largely used in the manufacture of poppet-valves." The consequence was that one evening, just after she had helped him out of a tight place with the word "disestablishmentarianism," the boy suddenly awoke to the truth and realized that she was all the world to him—or, as he put it to himself from force of habit, precious, beloved, darling, much-loved, highly esteemed or valued.

And yet, every time he tried to tell her so, he could get no farther than a sibilant gurgle which was no more practical use than a hiccup.

Something obviously had to be done, and George went to London to see a specialist.

"Yes?" said the specialist.

"I-I-I-I-I-I——" said George.

"You were saying——?"

"Woo-woo-woo-woo-woo-woo——"

"Sing it," said the specialist.

"S-s-s-s-s-s-s-s——?" said George, puzzled.

The specialist explained. He was a kindly man with moth-eaten whiskers and an eye like a meditative cod-fish.

"Many people," he said, "who are unable to articulate clearly in ordinary speech find themselves lucid and bell-like when they burst into song."

It seemed a good idea to George. He thought for a moment; then threw his head back, shut his eyes, and let it go in a musical baritone.

"I love a lassie, a bonny, bonny lassie," sang George. "She's as pure as the lily in the dell."

"No doubt," said the specialist, wincing a little.

"She's as sweet as the heather, the bonny purple heather—Susan, my Worcestershire bluebell."

"Ah!" said the specialist. "Sounds a nice girl. Is this she?" he asked, adjusting his glasses and peering at the photograph which George had extracted from the interior of the left side of his under-vest.

George nodded, and drew in breath.

"Yes, sir," he carolled, "that's my baby. No, sir, don't mean maybe. Yes, sir, that's my baby now. And, by the way, by the way, when I meet that preacher I shall say—'Yes, sir, that's my——'"

"Quite," said the specialist, hurriedly. He had a sensitive ear. "Quite, quite."

"If you knew Susie like I know Susie," George was beginning, but the other stopped him.

"Quite. Exactly. I shouldn't wonder. And now," said the specialist, "what precisely is the trouble? No," he added, hastily, as George inflated his lungs, "don't sing it. Write the particulars on this piece of paper."

George did so.

"H'm!" said the specialist, examining the screed. "You wish to propose to this girl, but you find yourself unable, incapable, incompetent, impotent, and powerless. Every time you attempt it, your vocal cords fail, fall short, are insufficient, wanting, deficient, and go blooey."

George nodded.

"A not unusual case. I have had to deal with this sort of thing before. The effect of love on the vocal cords of even a normally eloquent subject is frequently deleterious. As regards the habitual stammerer, tests have shown that in ninety-seven point five six nine recurring of cases the divine passion reduces him to a condition where he sounds like a soda-water siphon trying to recite Gunga Din. There is only one cure."

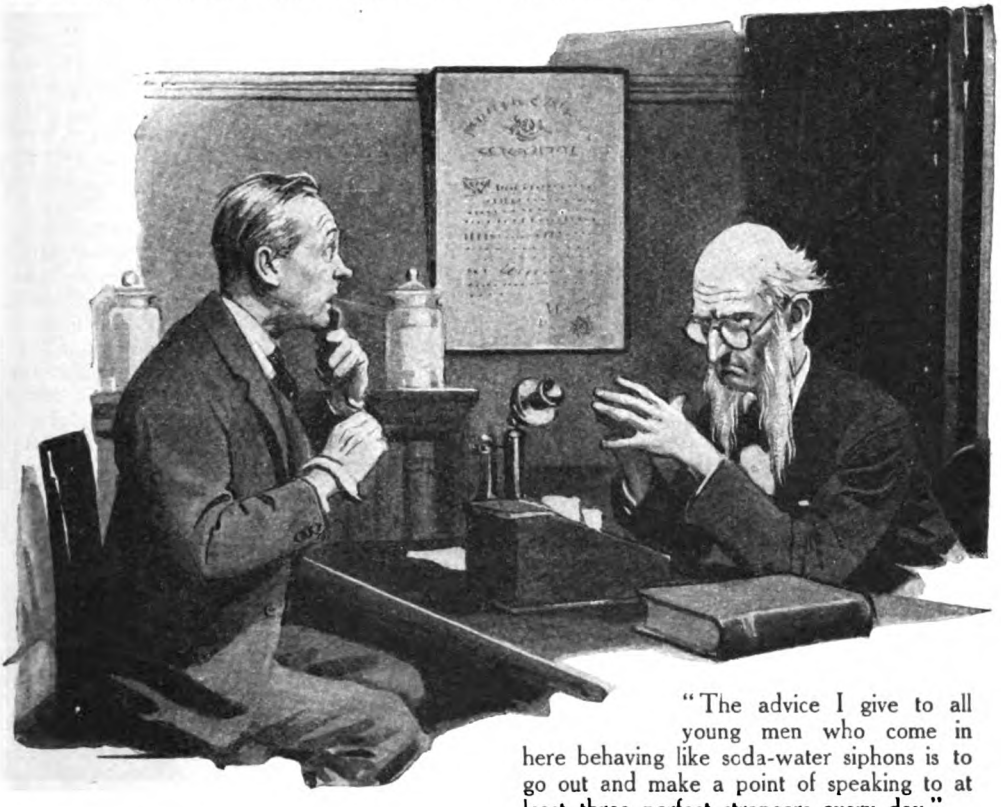
"W-w-w-w-w——?" asked George.

"I will tell you. Stammering," proceeded the specialist, putting the tips of his fingers together and eyeing George benevolently, "is mainly mental and is caused by shyness, which is caused by the inferiority complex, which in its turn is caused by suppressed desires or introverted inhibitions or something. The advice I give to all young men who come in here behaving like soda-water siphons is to go out and make a point of speaking to at least three perfect strangers every day. Engage these strangers in conversation, persevering no matter how priceless a chump you may feel, and before many weeks are out you will find that the little daily dose has had its effect. Shyness will wear off, and with it the stammer."

And, having requested the young man—in a voice of the clearest timbre, free from all trace of impediment—to hand over a fee of five guineas, the specialist sent George out into the world.

THE more George thought about the advice he had been given, the less he liked it. He shivered in the cab that took him to the station to catch the train

back to East Wobsley. Like all shy young men, he had never hitherto looked upon himself as shy—preferring to attribute his distaste for the society of his fellows to some subtle rareness of soul. But now that the thing had been put squarely up to him, he was compelled to realize that in all essentials he was a perfect rabbit. The thought of accosting perfect strangers and forcing his conversation upon them sickened him.



"The advice I give to all young men who come in here behaving like soda-water siphons is to go out and make a point of speaking to at **least three perfect strangers every day.**"

But, like all Mulliners, he had the right stuff in him. As he reached the platform and strode along it to the train, his teeth were set, his eyes shone with an almost fanatical light of determination, and he intended before his journey was over to conduct three heart-to-heart chats if he had to sing every bar of them.

The compartment into which he had made his way was empty at the moment, but just before the train started a very large, fierce-looking man got in. George would have preferred somebody a little less formidable for his first subject, but he braced himself and bent forward. And, as he did so, the man spoke.

"The Gug-gug-gug-gug-gug-Government," he said, "are mer-mer-mer-mer-making a fuf-fuf-fuf-frightful mer-mer-mess of things, der-der-don't you think, sir?"

George sank back as if he had been hit between the eyes. The train had moved out of the dimness of the station by now, and the sun was shining brightly on the speaker, illuminating his knobbly shoulders, his craggy jaw, and, above all, the shockingly choleric look in his eyes. To reply "Y-y-y-y-y-y-y-yes" to such a man would obviously be madness.

But to abstain from speech did not seem to be much better as a policy. George's silence appeared to arouse this man's worst passions. His face had turned purple and he glared painfully.

"I uk-uk-asked you a sus-sus-civil quk-quk-quk," he said, irascibly. "Are you d-d-d-d-deaf?"

All we Mulliners have been noted for our presence of mind. To open his mouth, point to his tonsils, and utter a strangled gurgle was with George the work of a moment.

The tension was relaxed. The man's annoyance abated.

"D-d-d-dumb?" he said, commiseratingly. "I beg your p-p-p-p-pup. I t-t-trust I have not caused you p-p-p-p-pain. It

m-must be tut-tut-tut-tut-terrible not to be able to sus-sus-speak fuf-fuf-fuf-fuf-fluently."

He then buried himself in his paper, and George sank back in his corner, quivering in every limb.

TO get to East Wobsley, as you doubtless know, you have to change at Ippleton and take the branch-line. By the time the train reached this junction, George's composure was somewhat restored. He deposited his belongings in a compartment of the East Wobsley train, which was waiting in a glued manner on the other side of the platform, and, finding that it would not start for some ten minutes, decided to pass the time by strolling up and down in the pleasant air.

It was a lovely afternoon. The sun was gilding the platform with its rays, and a gentle breeze blew from the west. A little brook ran tinkling at the side of the road; birds were singing in the hedgerows; and through the trees could be discerned dimly the noble façade of the County Lunatic Asylum. Soothed by his surroundings, George began to feel so refreshed that he regretted that in this wayside station there was no one present whom he could engage in talk.

It was at this moment that the distinguished-looking stranger entered the platform.

The new-comer was a man of imposing physique, simply dressed in pyjamas, brown boots, and a mackintosh. In his hand he carried a top-hat, and into this he was dipping his fingers, taking them out and then waving them in a curious manner to right and left. He nodded so affably to George that the latter, though a little surprised at the other's costume, decided to speak. After all, he reflected, clothes do not make the man, and, judging from the other's smile, a warm heart appeared to beat beneath that orange-and-mauve striped pyjama jacket.

"N-n-n-n-nice weather," he said.

"Glad you like it," said the stranger. "I ordered it specially."

George was a little puzzled by this remark, but he persevered.

"M-might I ask wur-wur-what you are dud-doing?"

"Doing?"

"With that her-her-her-her-hat?"

"Oh, with this hat? I see what you mean. Just scattering largesse to the multitude," replied the stranger, dipping his fingers once more and waving them with a generous gesture. "Devil of a bore, but it's expected of a man in my position. The fact is," he said, linking his arm in George's and speaking in a confidential undertone, "I'm the Emperor of Abyssinia. That's my palace over there," he said, pointing through the trees. "Don't let it go any farther. I'm travelling incog., under the name of Elmer J. Higginbotham."

It was with a rather sickly smile that George endeavoured to withdraw his arm from that of his companion, but the other would have none of this aloofness. He seemed to be in complete agreement with Shakespeare's dictum that a friend, when found, should be grappled to you with hooks of steel. He held George in a vice-like grip and drew him into a recess of the platform. He looked about him, and seemed satisfied.

"We are alone at last," he said.

This fact had already impressed itself with sickening clearness on the young man. There are few spots in the civilized world more deserted than the platform of a small country station. The sun shone on the smooth asphalt, on the gleaming rails, and on the machine which, in exchange for a penny placed in the slot marked "Matches," would supply a package of wholesome butterscotch—but on nothing else.

What George could have done with at the moment was a posse of police armed with stout clubs, and there was not even a dog in sight.

"I've been wanting to talk to you for a long time," said the stranger, genially.

"Huh-huh-have you?" said George.

"Yes. I want your opinion of human sacrifices."

George said he didn't like them.

"Why not?" asked the other, surprised.

George said it was hard to explain. He just didn't.

"Well, I think you're wrong," said the Emperor. "I know there's a school of thought growing up that holds your views, but I disapprove of it. I hate all this modern advanced thought. Human sacrifices have always been good enough for the Emperors of Abyssinia, and they're good enough for me. Kindly step in here, if you please."

He indicated the lamp-and-mop room, at which they had now arrived. It was a dark and sinister apartment, smelling strongly of oil and porters, and was probably the last place on earth in which George would have wished to be closeted with a man of such peculiar views. He shrank back.

"You go in first," he said.

"No larks," said the other, suspiciously.

"L-l-l-l-larks?"

"Yes. No pushing a fellow in and locking the door and squirting water at him through the window. I've had that happen to me before."

"Sus-certainly not."

" Right ! " said the Emperor. " You're a gentleman and I'm a gentleman. Both gentlemen. You haven't a knife, have you ? "

" No. No knife."

" Ah, well," said the Emperor, " then we'll have to look about for something else. No doubt we shall manage somehow."

And with the debonair manner which so became him, he scattered another handful of largesse and walked into the lamp-room.

It was not the fact that he had given his word as a gentleman that kept George from locking the door. There is probably no family on earth more nicely scrupulous as regards keeping its promises than the Mulliners, but I am compelled to admit that, had George been able to find the key, he would have locked that door without hesitation. Not being able to find the key, he had to be satisfied with banging it. This done, he leaped back and raced away down the platform. A confused noise within seemed to indicate that the Emperor had become involved with some lamps.

George made the best of the respite. Covering the ground at a high rate of speed, he flung himself into the train and took refuge under the seat.

There he remained, quaking. At one time he thought that his uncongenial acquaintance had got upon his track, for the door of the compartment opened and a cool wind blew in upon him. Then, glancing along the floor, he perceived feminine ankles. The relief was enormous, but even in his relief George, who was the soul of modesty, did not forget his manners. He closed his eyes.

A voice spoke.

" Porter ! "

" Yes, ma'am ? "

" What was all that disturbance as I came into the station ? "

" Patient escaped from the asylum, ma'am."

" Good gracious ! "

The voice would undoubtedly have spoken further, but at this moment the train began to move. There came the sound of a body descending upon a cushioned seat, and some little time later the rustling of a paper. The train gathered speed and jolted on.

George had never before travelled under the seat of a railway-carriage ; and, though he belonged to the younger generation, which is supposed to be so avid of new experiences, he had no desire to do so now. He decided to emerge, and, if possible, to emerge with the minimum of ostentation. Little as he knew of women, he was aware that as a sex they are apt to be startled by the sight of men crawling out from under the seats of compartments. He began his manœuvres by poking out his head and surveying the terrain.

All was well. The woman, in her seat across the way, was engrossed in her paper. Moving in a series of noiseless wriggles, George extricated himself from his hiding-place and, with a twist which would have been impossible to a man not in the habit of doing Swedish exercises daily before breakfast, heaved himself into the corner seat. The woman continued reading her paper.

THE events of the past quarter of an hour had tended rather to drive from George's mind the mission which he had undertaken on leaving the specialist's office. But now, having leisure for reflection, he realized that, if he meant to complete his first day of the cure, he was allowing himself to run sadly behind schedule. Speak to three strangers, the specialist had told him, and up to the present he had spoken to only one. True, this one had been a pretty considerable stranger, and a less conscientious young man than George Mulliner might have considered himself justified in counting him as one and a half or even two. But George had the dogged, honest Mulliner streak in him, and he refused to quibble.

He nerved himself for action, and cleared his throat.

" Ah-h'rm ! " said George.

And, having opened the ball, he dug up a winning smile and waited for his companion to make the next move.

The move which his companion made was in an upwards direction, and measured from six to eight inches. She dropped her paper and regarded George with a pale-eyed horror. One pictures her a little in the position of Robinson Crusoe when he saw the footprint in the sand. She had been convinced that she was completely alone, and lo ! out of space a voice had spoken to her. Her face worked, but she made no remark.

George, on his side, was also feeling a little ill at ease. Women always increased his natural shyness. He never knew what to say to them.

Then a happy thought struck him. He had just glanced at his watch and found the hour to be nearly four-thirty. Women, he knew, loved a drop of tea at about this time, and fortunately there was in his suit-case a thermos-flask full of the right stuff.

" Pardon me, but I wonder if you would care for a cup of tea ? " was what he wanted to say, but, as so often happened with him when in the presence of the opposite sex, he could get no farther than a sort of sizzling sound like a cockroach calling to its young.

The woman continued to stare at him. Her

eyes were now about the size of regulation standard golf-balls, and her breathing suggested the last stages of asthma. And it was at this point that George, struggling for speech, had one of those inspirations which frequently come to Mulliners. There flashed into his mind what the specialist had told him about singing. Say it with music—that was the thing to do.

He delayed no longer.

"Tea for two and two for tea and me for you and you for me——"

He was shocked to observe his companion turning Nile-green. He decided to make his meaning clearer.

"I have a nice thermos. I have a full thermos. Won't you share my thermos, too? When skies are grey and you feel you are blue, tea sends the sun smiling through. I have a nice thermos. I have a full thermos. May I pour out some for you?"

You will agree with me, I think, that no invitation could have been more happily put, but his companion was not responsive. With one last agonized look at him, she closed her eyes and sank back in her seat. Her lips had now turned a curious grey-blue colour, and they were moving feebly. She reminded George, who, like myself, was a keen fisherman, of a newly-gaffed salmon.

GEORGE sat back in his corner, brooding. Rack his brain as he might, he could think of no topic which could be guaranteed to interest, elevate, and amuse. He looked out of the window with a sigh.

The train was now approaching the dear old familiar East Wobsley country. He began to recognize landmarks. A wave of sentiment poured over George as he thought of Susan, and he reached for the bag of buns which he had bought at the refreshment room at Ippleton. Sentiment always made him hungry.

He took his thermos out of the suit-case, and, unscrewing the top, poured himself out a cup of tea. Then, placing the thermos on the seat, he drank.

He looked across at his companion. Her eyes were still closed, and she uttered little sighing noises. George was half inclined to renew his offer of tea, but the only tune he could remember was "Hard-Hearted Hannah, the Vamp from Savannah," and it was difficult to fit suitable words to it. He ate his bun and gazed out at the familiar scenery.

Now, as you approach East Wobsley, the train, I must mention, has to pass over some points; and so violent is the sudden jerking that strong men have been known to spill their beer. George, forgetting this in his preoccupation, had placed the thermos only a few inches from the edge of the seat. The result was that, as the train reached the points, the flask leaped like a live thing, dived to the floor, and exploded.

Even George was distinctly upset by the sudden sharpness of the report. His bun sprang from his hand and was dashed to fragments. He blinked thrice in rapid succession. His heart tried to jump out of his mouth and loosened a front tooth.

But on the woman opposite the effect of the untoward occurrence was still more marked. With a single piercing shriek, she rose from her seat straight into the air like a rocketing pheasant; and, having clutched the communication-cord, fell back again. Impressive as her previous leap had been, she excelled it by several inches. I do not know what the existing record for the Sitting High-Jump is, but she undoubtedly lowered it; and if George had been a member of the Olympic Games Selection Committee, he would have signed this woman up immediately.

IT is a curious thing that, in spite of the railway companies' sporting willingness to let their patrons have a tug at the extremely moderate price of five pounds a go, very few people have ever either pulled a communication-cord or seen one pulled. There is, thus, a widespread ignorance as to what precisely happens on such occasions.

The procedure, George tells me, is as follows: First there comes a grinding noise, as the brakes are applied. Then the train stops. And finally, from every point of the compass, a seething mob of interested onlookers begins to appear.

It was about a mile and a half from East Wobsley that the affair had taken place, and as far as the eye could reach the countryside was totally devoid of humanity. A moment before nothing had been visible but smiling cornfields and broad pasture-lands; but now from east, west, north, and south running figures began to appear. We must remember that George at the time was in a somewhat overwrought frame of mind, and his statements should therefore be accepted with caution; but he tells me that out of the middle of a single empty meadow, entirely devoid of cover, no fewer than twenty-seven distinct rustics suddenly appeared, having undoubtedly shot up through the ground.

The rails, which had been completely unoccupied, were now thronged with so dense a crowd of navvies that it seemed to George absurd to pretend that there was any unemployment in England. Every member of the labouring classes throughout the country was so palpably present. Moreover, the train, which at Ippleton had seemed sparsely occupied, was disgorging passengers from

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And behind him followed a vast crowd.

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we can safely assume that, wherever else he went, he got plenty of exercise.

But the pleasantest of functions must end, and, just as the setting sun was gilding the spire of the ivy-covered church of St. Barnabas the Resilient, where George as a child had sat so often, enlivening the tedium of the sermon by making faces at the choir-boys, a damp and bedraggled figure might have been observed crawling painfully along the High Street of East

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tion. I think myself that a great deal of *sang-froid* and address would be required even by the most self-possessed in order to pass off such a *contretemps*. To George, I may say at once, the crisis revealed itself immediately as one which he was totally incapable of handling. The one clear thought that stood out from the welter of his emotions was the reflection that it was advisable to remove himself, and to do so without delay. Drawing a deep breath, he shot swiftly off the mark.

All we Mulliners have been athletes; and George, when at the University, had been noted for his speed of foot. He ran now as he had never run before. His statement, however, that as he sprinted across the first field he distinctly saw a rabbit shoot an envious glance at him as he passed and shrug its shoulders hopelessly, I am inclined to discount. George, as I have said before, was a little over-excited.

Nevertheless, it is not to be questioned that he made good going. And he had need to, for

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him; and dimly, as he ran, he could hear voices in the throng informally discussing the advisability of lynching him. Moreover, the field through which he was running, a moment before a bare expanse of green, was now black with figures, headed by a man with a beard who carried a pitchfork. George swerved sharply to the right, casting a swift glance over his shoulder at his pursuers. He disliked them all, but especially the man with the pitchfork.

It is impossible for one who was not an eye-witness to say how long the chase continued and how much ground was covered by the interested parties. I know the East Wobsley country well, and I have checked George's statements; and, if it is true that he travelled east as far as Little-Wigmarsh-in-the-Dell and as far west as Higgleford-cum-Wortlebury-beneath-the-Hill, he must undoubtedly have done a lot of running.

But a point which must not be forgotten is that, to a man not in a condition to observe closely, the village of Higgleford-cum-Wortlebury-beneath-the-Hill might easily not have been Higgleford-cum-Wortlebury-beneath-the-Hill at all, but another hamlet which in many respects closely resembles it. I need scarcely say that I allude to Lesser-Snodsbury-in-the-Vale.

Let us assume, therefore, that George, having touched Little-Wigmarsh-in-the-Dell, shot off at a tangent and reached Lesser-Snodsbury-in-the-Vale. This would be a considerable run. And, as he remembers flitting past Farmer Higgins's pigsty and the Dog and Duck at Pondlebury Parva and splashing through the brook Wipple at the point where it joins the River Wopple, we can safely assume that, wherever else he went, he got plenty of exercise.

George leaped to the window. Rounding the corner was the man with the pitchfork. And behind him followed a vast crowd.

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Wobsley in the direction of the cosy little cottage known to its builder as Chatsworth and to the village tradesmen as " Mulliner's."

It was George, home from the hunting-field.

SLOWLY George Mulliner made his way to the familiar door, and, passing through it, flung himself into his favourite chair. But a moment later a more imperious need than the desire to rest forced itself upon his attention. Rising stiffly, he tottered to the kitchen and mixed himself a revivifying whisky-and-soda. Then, refilling his glass, he returned to the sitting-room, to find that it was no longer empty. A slim, fair girl, tastefully attired in tailor-made tweeds, was leaning over the desk on which he kept his Dictionary of English Synonyms.

She looked up as he entered, startled.

" Why, Mr. Mulliner ! " she exclaimed. " What has been happening ? Your clothes are torn, rent, ragged, tattered, and your hair is all dishevelled, untrimmed, hanging loose or negligently, at loose ends ! "

George smiled a wan smile.

" You are right," he said. " And, what is more, I am suffering from extreme fatigue, weariness, lassitude, exhaustion, prostration, and languor."

The girl gazed at him, a divine pity in her soft eyes.

" I'm so sorry," she murmured. " So very sorry, grieved, distressed, afflicted, pained, mortified, dejected, and upset."

George took her hand. Her sweet sympathy had effected the cure for which he had been seeking so long. Coming on top of the violent emotions through which he had been passing all day, it seemed to work on him like some healing spell, charm, or incantation. Suddenly, in a flash, he realized that he was no longer a stammerer. Had he wished at that moment to say " Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers," he could have done it without a second thought.

But he had better things to say than that.

" Miss Blake—Susan—Susie." He took her other hand in his. His voice rang out clear and unimpeded. It seemed to him incredible that he had ever yammered at this girl like an overheated steam-radiator. " It cannot have escaped your notice that I have long entertained towards you sentiments warmer and deeper than those of ordinary friendship. It is love, Susan, that has been animating my bosom. Love, first a tiny seed, has grown and grown in my heart till, blazing into flame, it has swept away on the crest of its wave my diffidence, my doubt, my fears, and my foreboding, and now, like the topmost topaz of some ancient tower, it cries to all the world in a voice of thunder: ' You are mine ! My mate ! Predestined to me since Time first began ! ' As the star guides the mariner when, battered by boiling billows, he hies him home to the haven of hope and happiness, so do you gleam upon me along life's rough road and seem to say, ' Have courage, George ! I am here ! ' Susan, I am not an eloquent man—I cannot speak fluently as I could wish—but these simple words which you have just heard come from the heart, from the unspotted heart of an English gentleman. Susan, I love you. Will you be my wife, married woman, matron, spouse, helpmeet, consort, partner or better half ? "

" Oh, George ! " said Susan. " Yes, yes, aye, aye ! Decidedly, unquestionably, indubitably, incontrovertibly, and past all dispute ! "

He folded her in his arms. And, as he did so, there came from the street outside—faintly, as from a distance—the sound of feet and voices. George leaped to the window. Rounding the corner, just by the Cow and Wheelbarrow public-house, licensed to sell ales, wines, and spirits, was the man with the pitchfork. And behind him followed a vast crowd.

" My darling," said George. " For purely personal and private reasons, into which I need not enter, I must now leave you. Will you join me later ? "

" I will follow you to the ends of the earth," replied Susan, passionately.

" It will not be necessary," said George. " I am only going down to the coal-cellar. I shall spend the next half-hour or so there. If anybody calls and asks for me, perhaps you would not mind telling them that I am out."

" I will, I will," said Susan. " And, George, by the way. What I really came here for was to ask you if you knew a hyphenated word of nine letters, ending in k and signifying an implement employed in the pursuit of agriculture."

" Pitch-fork, sweetheart," said George. " But you may take it from me, as one who knows, that agriculture isn't the only thing it is used in pursuit of."

AND since that day (concluded Mr. Mulliner) George, believe me or believe me not, has not had the slightest trace of an impediment in his speech. He is now the chosen orator at all political rallies for miles around ; and so offensively self-confident has his manner become that only last Friday he had his eye blacked by a hay-corn-and-feed merchant of the name of Stubbs. It just shows you, doesn't it ?

(Another story by P. G. Wodehouse next month.)

"Days of My Life"

By

H. RIDER HAGGARD

VI.—EGYPT.

My first visit to the land of the Pharaohs—"The most wondrous tombs in all the world"—A narrow escape from death—A thrilling story of the Pyramids.

AFTER "She" had been fairly launched and the proofs of "Jess" passed for press, I started, in January, 1887, on a journey to Egypt. From a boy ancient Egypt had fascinated me, and I had read everything concerning it on which I could lay hands. Now I was possessed by a great desire to see it for myself and to write a romance on the subject of Cleopatra—a sufficiently ambitious project.

A friend of mine, who is a mystic of the first water, amused me very much not long ago by forwarding to me a list of my previous incarnations, or rather of three of them, which had been revealed to him in some mysterious way. Two of these were Egyptian, one as a noble in the time of Pepi II., who lived somewhere about 4000 B.C., and the second as one of the minor Pharaohs. In the third, according to him, I was a Norseman of the seventh century, who was one of the first to sail to the Nile, whence he returned but to die in sight of his old home. After that, saith the prophet, I slumbered for twelve hundred years until my present life.

I cannot say that I have been converted to my friend's perfectly sincere beliefs, since the reincarnation business seems to me to be quite insusceptible of proof. If it could be proved, how much more interesting it would make our lives! But that, I think, will never happen, even if it be true that we return again to these glimpses of the moon, which, like everything else, is possible.

Still, it is a fact that some men have a strong affinity for certain lands and periods of history, which of course may be explained by the circumstance that their direct ancestors dwelt in those lands and at those periods. Thus I love the Norse people of the Saga and pre-Saga times. But then I have good reason to believe that my forefathers were Danes. I am, however, unable to trace any Egyptian ancestor—if such existed at all it is too long ago.

However these things may be, with the old Norse and the old Egyptians I am at home. I can enter into their thoughts and feelings; I can even understand their theologies. I have a respect for Thor and Odin, I venerate Isis, and always feel inclined to bow to the moon!

Whatever the reason, I seem to myself to understand the Norse folk of anywhere about A.D. 800, and the Egyptians from Menes down to the Ptolemaic period, much better than I understand the people of the age in which I live. They are more familiar to me. They interest me much more. For instance, I positively loathe the Georgian period, about which I can never even bring myself to read. On the other hand, I have the greatest sympathy with savages, Zulus for instance, with whom I always got on extremely well. Perchance my mystical friend has left a savage incarnation out of his list.

For these reasons I know well that I could never be a success as a modern novelist. I can see the whole thing; it goes on under my eyes, and as a magistrate and in other ways I am continually in touch with it. I could write of it also if I could bring myself to the task. I would undertake to produce a naturalistic novel that would sell

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—why should I not do so with my experience? But the subject bores me too much. The naturalism I would not mind, but if it is to be truthful it is impossible and, to say the least, undifying. The petty social conditions are what bore me. I know this is not right; but it is a failing in myself, since under all conditions human nature is the same and the true artist should be able to present it with equal power. But we are as we are made. Even the great Shakespeare, I observe, sought distant scenes and far-off events for his tragedies, seeking, I presume, to escape the trammels of his time.

TO return from this dissertation. I went to Egypt seeking knowledge and a holiday. The knowledge I acquired, or some of it, for when the mind is open and desirous it absorbs things as a dry sponge does water. I had an introduction to Brugsch Bey, who was then, I think, the head of the Boulak Museum. He took me round that heavenly place. He showed me the mummies of Seti, Rameses, and the rest, and oh! with what veneration did I look upon them. He told me, trembling with emotion, of the discovery, then recent, of the great Deir-el-Behari *cache* of Pharaohs and their treasures. He said that when he got to the bottom of that well and entered the long passage where for tens of centuries had slept the mighty dead, huddled together there to save them from the wicked hands of robbers or enemies, and by the light of torches had read a few of the names upon the coffins, he nearly fainted with joy, as well he might. Also he described to me how, when the royal bodies were borne from this resting-place and shipped for conveyance to Cairo, there to find a new tomb in the glass cases of a museum, the fellaheen women ran along the banks wailing because their ancient kings were being taken from among them. They cast dust upon their hair, still dressed in a hundred plaits, as was that of those far-off mothers of theirs who wailed when these Pharaohs were borne with solemn pomp to the homes they called eternal. Poor kings! who dreamed not of the glass cases of the Cairo Museum and the gibes of tourists who find the awful majesty of their withered brows a matter for jest and smiles. Often I wonder how we dare to meddle with these hallowed relics, especially now in my age. Then I did not think so much of it; indeed, I have taken a hand at the business myself.

On that same visit I saw the excavation of some very early burials in the shadow of the pyramids of Ghizeh, so early that the process of mummification was not then practised. The skeletons lay upon their sides in the pre-natal position. The learned gentleman in charge of the excavation read to me the inscription in the little antechamber of one of these tombs.

If I remember right, it ran as follows: "Here A. B. (I forget the name of the deceased), priest of the Pyramid of Khufu, sleeps in Osiris awaiting the resurrection. He passed all his long life in righteousness and peace."

That at any rate was the sense of it, and I bethought me that such an epitaph would have been equally fitting to, let us say, the Dean of a cathedral in the present century. Well, perhaps a day will come when Westminster Abbey and our other sacred burying-places will be ransacked in like manner, and the relics of *our* kings and great ones exposed in the museum of some race unknown of a different faith to ours. In Egypt, I may add, even an identity of faith does not protect the dead, since the Christian bishops down to those of the eighth or ninth century have been disinterred, for I have seen many of their broidered vestments in public and private collections. The idea seems to be that if only you have been dead long enough your bones are fair prey. All of which is to me a great argument in favour of cremation.

Still, it must be remembered that it is from the Egyptian tombs that we have dug the history of Egypt, which now is better and more certainly known than that of the Middle Ages. Were it not for the burial customs of the old inhabitants of Khem and their system of the preservation of mortal remains, that these might await the resurrection of the body in which they were such firm believers, we should be almost ignorant of the lives of that great people. Only ought not the thing to stop somewhere? For my part, I should like to see the bodies of the Pharaohs, after they had been reproduced in wax, reverently laid in the chambers and passages of the Great Pyramids and there sealed up for ever, in such a fashion that no future thief could break in and steal.

Dr. Budge told me of a certain tomb which he and his guide were the first to enter since it had been closed, I think about four thousand years before. He said that it was absolutely perfect. There lay the coffin of the lady, there stood the funeral jars of offering, there on the breast was a fan of which the ostrich plumes were turned to feathers of dust. There, too, in the sand of the floor were the footprints of those who had borne the corpse to burial. Those footprints always impressed me very much.

In considering such matters the reader should remember that nothing in the world was so sacred to the old Egyptian as were his corpse and his tomb. In the tomb

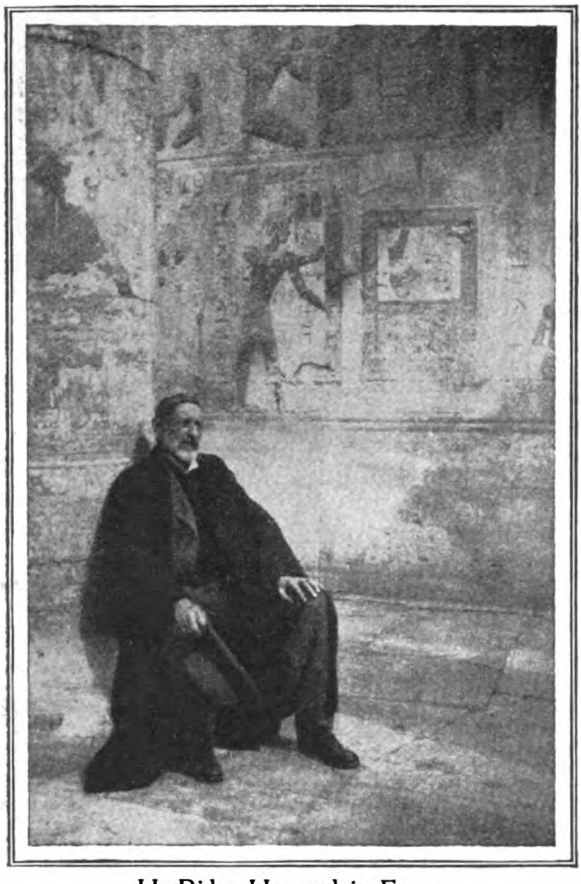
slept the body, but according to his immemorial faith it did not sleep alone, for with it, watching it eternally, was the Ka or Double, and to it from time to time came the Spirit. This Ka or Double had, so he believed, great powers, and could even wreak vengeance on the disturber of the grave or the thief of the corpse.

From Cairo I proceeded up the Nile, inspecting all the temples and the tombs of the kings at Thebes, to my mind, and so far as my experience goes, the most wondrous tombs in all the world. So, too, thought the tourists of twenty centuries or more ago, for there are the writings on the walls recording their admiration and salutations to the ghosts of the dead, and so, too, in all probability will think the tourists of two thousand years hence, for the world can never reproduce such vast and mysterious burying-places, any more than it can reproduce the pyramids.

About eighteen years later I revisited these tombs and found them much easier of access and illuminated with electric light. Somehow in these new conditions they did not produce quite the same effect upon me. When first I was there I remember struggling down one of them, I think it was that of the great Seti, lit by dim torches, and I remember also the millions of bats that must be beaten away. I can see them now, those bats, weaving endless figures in the torchlight, dancers in a ghostly dance. Indeed, afterwards I incarnated them all in the great bat that was a spirit which haunted the pyramid where Cleopatra and her lover, Harmachis, sought the treasure of the Pharaoh Men-kau-ra. When next I stood in that place I do not recall any bats; I suppose that the electric light had scared them away.

The head of the Boulak Museum showed me the mummies of Seti, Rameses, and the rest.

However, on that second visit, with Mr. Carter, at that time a superintendent of antiquities for this part of Egypt, my companions and I were the first white men, except the discoverer, a Greek gentleman, to enter the burying-place of Nofertari, the favourite, or at least the head wife, of Rameses II. There on the walls were her pictures as fresh as the day they were painted. There she sat playing chess with her royal husband or communing with the gods. But it is too long to describe. The tomb had been plundered in ancient days, probably a couple of thousand years ago. Just before the plunderers entered a flood of



H. Rider Haggard in Egypt.

water had rushed down it, for when they came the washed paint was still wet, and I could see the prints of their fingers as they supported themselves on the slope of the incline.

One of my tomb explorations in 1887 nearly proved my last adventure. Opposite Assouan some great caverns had just been discovered. Into one of these I crept through a little hole, for the sand was almost up to the very top of the doorway. I found it full of hundreds of dead, or, at least, there seemed to be hundreds, most of whom had evidently been buried without coffins, for they were but skeletons, although mixed up with them was the mummy of a lady and the fragments of her painted mummy case. As I contemplated these gruesome remains in the dim light I began to wonder how it came about that there were so many of them. Then I recollected that about the time of Christ the town which is now Assouan had been almost depopulated by a fearful plague, and it occurred to me that doubtless at this time these old burying-places had been reopened and filled up with the victims of the scourge—also that the germ of plague is said to be very long-lived! Incautiously enough, I shouted to my companions, who were outside, that I was coming out, and set to work to crawl along the hole which led to the doorway. But the echoes of my voice, reverberating in that place, had caused the sand to begin to pour down between the cracks of the masonry from above, so that the weight of it, falling upon my back, pinned me fast. Like a flash I realized that in another few seconds I, too, should be buried. Gathering all my strength I made a desperate effort and succeeded in reaching the mouth of the hole just before it was too late, for my friends had wandered off to some distance and were quite unaware of my plight.

One of these, a young fellow named Brownrigg, had a worse, because a more prolonged, experience. He, I, and a lady were contemplating the second pyramid, when suddenly he announced that he was going to climb up it as far as the granite cap, which still remains for something over a hundred feet at the top.

As he was a splendid athlete with a very good head, this did not surprise us. Up he went while we sat and watched him, till he came to the cap, which at that time only eight or nine white people had ever ascended, of course with the help of guides. To our astonishment here we suddenly saw him take off his boots. The next thing we saw was Brownrigg climbing up the polished granite of the cap. Up he went from crack to crack till at last he reached the top in safety, and there proceeded to execute a war dance of triumph. Then, after a rest, he began to descend.

I noticed from the desert some hundreds of feet below that, although he commenced his descent with his face outwards, which is the right method, presently he turned so that it was against the sloping pyramid. Then I began to grow frightened. When he had done about thirty or forty feet of the descent I saw him stretch down his stockinged foot seeking some cranny, and draw it up again—because he could not reach the cranny without falling backwards. Twice or thrice he did this and then remained quite still upon the cap with outstretched arms like one crucified. Evidently he could move neither up nor down.

Whilst I stared, horrified—we three were quite alone in the place—a white-robed

Arab rushed past me. He was the Sheik of the Pyramids, which without a word he began to climb with the furious activity of a frightened cat. Up he went, over the lower and easy part, on to the cap, which seemed to present no difficulties to him, for he knew exactly where to set his toes and had the head of an eagle or a mountain goat. Now he was just underneath Brownrigg and saying something to him. And now from that great height came a still, small voice.

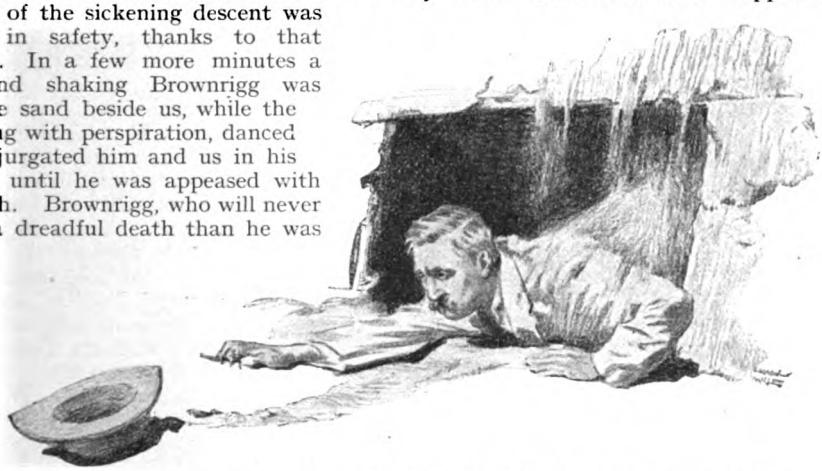
"If you touch me I'll knock you down!" said the voice.

Yes, crucified there upon this awful cap, he declared in true British fashion that he would knock his saviour down.

I shut my eyes, and when I looked again the sheik had got Brownrigg's foot down into the crack below, how I never discovered. Well, the rest of the sickening descent was accomplished in safety, thanks to that splendid sheik. In a few more minutes a very pale and shaking Brownrigg was gasping on the sand beside us, while the Arab, streaming with perspiration, danced round and objurgated him and us in his native tongue until he was appeased with large baksheesh. Brownrigg, who will never be nearer to a dreadful death than he was that day, told me afterwards that, strong as his head was, he found it impossible to attempt the descent face outwards, since the thickness of the cap hid the sides of the pyramid from his sight, so that all he saw beneath him was some three hundred feet of empty space. Therefore he turned and soon found himself quite helpless, since he could neither find any foothold beneath him nor could he re-ascend. Had not the watchful Arab seen him and his case, in another few minutes he must have fallen and been dashed to pieces at our feet. The memory of that scene still makes my back feel cold and my flesh creep. I have tried to reproduce it in "Ayesha," where Holly falls from the rock to the ice-covered river far beneath.

From Egypt I sailed to Cyprus in a tub of a ship where a rat had its nest behind my bunk. It was my first visit to that delightful and romantic isle, over which all the civilizations have poured in turn, wave by wave, till at length came the Turk, beneath whose foot "the grass does not grow," and, by the special mercy of Providence, after the Turk the English. Here I was the guest of my old Chief, Sir Henry Bulwer, who at that time was High Commissioner for the island.

In this beautiful island of Venus I trusted, before turning to my tasks again, to have a little real holiday after a good many years of very hard work. But as it happened holidays had never been for me. At the age of nineteen, to say nothing of the preliminary toils of education, I began to labour, and at the age of fifty-six I still find myself labouring with the firm and, so far as I can judge, well-grounded prospect that I shall continue to labour on public and private business until health and intelligence fail me, or, as I hope, death overtakes me while these still remain.



I succeeded in reaching the mouth of the hole just before it was too late.

VII.—"CLEOPATRA" AND "ALLAN QUATERMAIN."

I find myself a celebrity—Writing "Cleopatra"—Thomas Hardy and the critics—Great success of "Allan Quatermain"—Stories of Umslopogaas—Winston Churchill as a youthful critic.

ON my return to England, what between success and attacks I found myself quite a celebrity, one whose name was in everybody's mouth. I made money. For instance, I sold "Cleopatra" for a large sum in cash, and also "Colonel Quaritch," a tale of English country life which Longman liked—it was dedicated to him—and Lang

hated so much that I think he called it the worst book that ever was written. Or perhaps it was someone else who favoured it with that description. Some of this money I lost, for really I had not time to look after it, and the investments suggested by kind friends connected with the City were apt to prove disappointing. Some of it I spent in paying off back debts and mortgages on our property, and in doing up the house, which it sadly needed, as well as countless farm buildings, and a proportion was absorbed by our personal expenditure. For instance, we moved into a larger house in London, in Redcliffe Square, and there entertained a little, though not to any great extent, for we never were extravagant. Also I became what is called famous, which in practice means that people are glad to ask you out to dinner and when you enter a room everyone turns to look at you. Also it means that bores of the most appalling description write to you from all over the earth, and expect answers.

Therefore, although I had the affection of my own friends and made one or two new ones, such as Charles Longman, with whom, to my great good fortune, I began to grow intimate about this time, it came about that I was much envied and not a little hated by many who made my life bitter with constant attacks in the Press, which, being somewhat sensitive by nature, I was foolish enough to feel. Indeed, there came a time when for a good many years I would read no reviews of my books, unless chance thrust them under my eyes. Therefore of those years there are few literary records.

In addition to much worry, my work at this time was truly overwhelming. The unfortunate agreement with a firm of publishers to which I have already alluded had been abrogated without a lawsuit, through the admirable efforts of my friend and agent, Mr. A. P. Watt. But this was done at a price, and that price was that I should write them two stories, which, in addition to my other and more serious work, of course cost me time and labour. The tales that I wrote for them were called respectively "Mr. Meeson's Will" and "Allan's Wife." Ultimately, after various "business complications," in the course of which I lost some money that was due for royalties, together with "Dawn" and "The Witch's Head" they passed into the hands of Messrs. Longmans.

Then I began "Cleopatra" on May 27th, 1887, and, as the MS. records, finished it on August 2nd of the same year. In order to do this I fled from London to Ditchingham, because in town there were so many distractions and calls upon my time that I could not get on with my work. I remember my disgust when on arrival there an invitation to be present in Westminster Abbey, on the occasion of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria, was forwarded too late for me to be able to avail myself of it. Although I do not greatly care for such pomp and circumstances, that was a ceremony which I should have liked to see.

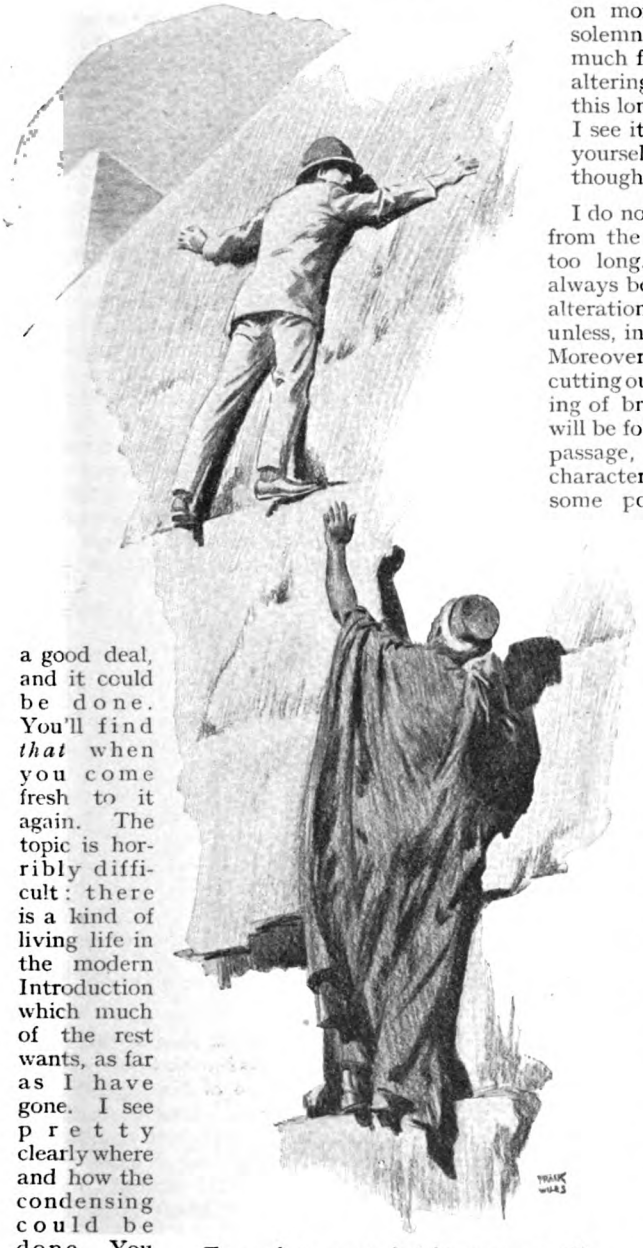
Charles Longman thought very highly indeed of "Cleopatra." Also, he backed his opinion by buying the copyright of the book for a large sum of money.

BY the way, unluckily for myself, I also sold "Jess" outright and *not* for a large sum. Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co., however, behaved extremely well to me, for when the novel proved such a great success they sent me a second cheque of a like amount as that they had given for the copyright, a thing which perhaps few publishers would have done. Moreover, a dozen years or so later they offered to give me back a half interest in the book if I would write them another work. This I was very anxious to do, as both for sentimental and business reasons I should much have liked to regain a part proprietorship in "Jess." But when I wrote to Charles Longman on the subject he begged me to abandon the idea, and as I could not hurt the feelings of such an old and valued friend, I did so, with many sighs.

I should explain that at the time I published only with the Longmans. Afterwards, to my great sorrow, I was obliged to abandon this arrangement for the reason that I found it impossible to place works serially unless I could give the book rights as well. For a while I got over this difficulty, or, rather, my agents did, by selling serial rights to the two great illustrated papers. But in course of time, I suppose as they began to feel the pressure of the competition of the new sixpenny magazines, they gave up publishing serials, or, at any rate, paying much for them. So I had to go to those who would run the serial if, and only if, they were given the book rights also.

Lang did not think quite so highly of "Cleopatra" as Longman, at any rate at first, as the following letter shows:—

> "You will loathe me for the advice, but if I were you I'd put 'Cleopatra' away for as long as possible, and then read it as a member of the public. You will find, I think, that between chapters three and eight it is too long, too full of antiquarian detail, and too slow in movement to carry the general public with it. I am pretty certain of this. The style is very well kept up, but it is not an advantage for a story to be told in an archaic style (this, of course, is unavoidable). For that reason I would condense



From that great height came a still, small voice: "If you touch me I'll knock you down!"

a good deal, and it could be done. You'll find *that* when you come fresh to it again. The topic is horribly difficult: there is a kind of living life in the modern Introduction which much of the rest wants, as far as I have gone. I see pretty clearly where and how the condensing could be done. You don't want a reader's interest to fall asleep, and now it would in places. I am writing with perfect frankness because, of course, I want it to be A 1 in its *genre*—a dreadfully difficult *genre* it is. As far as I have read, I have made a few verbal notes where the style occasionally is not consistent. But the main thing is, at any expense, to hurry on more—to give the impression of solemnity, but at more speed and with much fewer strokes. I know you hate altering, so it is *à prendre ou à laisser*, this long screed of opinion. Of course, I see it is a book you have written for yourself. But the B.P. must also be thought of."

I do not know whether I cut out much from the chapters which Lang thought too long. Probably not, since I have always been a very bad hand at making alterations in what I have once put down, unless, indeed, I rewrite the entire work. Moreover, at any rate in my books, this cutting out of passages resembles the pulling of bricks from a built wall, since it will be found that every, or nearly every, passage, even if it is of a reflective character, is developed or alluded to in some portion of what follows. The pulling out of bricks may, or may not, improve the appearance of the wall, but it certainly decreases its stability.

In the Author's Note at the commencement of "Cleopatra" I see that I wrote the following passage, evidently having Lang's criticism in my mind:—

"Unfortunately, it is scarcely possible to write a book of this nature and period without introducing a certain amount of illustrative matter, for by no other means can the long dead past be made to live again before the reader's eyes with all its accessories of faded pomp and forgotten mystery. For such students as seek a story only, and are not interested in the Faith, ceremonies, or customs of the Mother of Religion and Civilization, ancient Egypt, it is, however, respectfully suggested that they should exercise the art of skipping and open this tale at its second book."

I dedicated "Cleopatra" to my mother, because I thought it the best book I had written, or was likely to write, although since then I have modified that opinion in favour of one or two that came after it. The following letter from her was written not long before her death, and was, I think, the last I ever received from her:—

"Bradenham,
29th June, 1889.

"MY DEAREST RIDER,

"I have only a few minutes to write and thank you for your charming gift, but I must not let the week pass over without my doing so. I think it is got up as well as possible, and the Dedication is most successfully accomplished, which must be as gratifying to you as to me. I have not thoroughly looked at the illustrations, but see that they are very much more to be liked than those of the *Illustrated News*. Thank you greatly for your excellent work, my dear son. It certainly redounds greatly to you, dearest Rider, whatever the critics may say, and I have no doubt they will do their worst. But I think posterity will do justice to your production. I will write no more as I cannot easily add to this.

"Ever your most affectionate mother,
"ELLA HAGGARD."

There is also a letter from my father, in which he says that my mother opened and looked at the book "not without tears." Whether she ever read it herself I do not know, for by this time her sight was failing much.

A few months later I stood at her death-bed and received her last blessing. But of that long-drawn-out and very sad scene, even after the lapse of two-and-twenty years, I cannot bear to write.

"CLEOPATRA" ran serially through *The Illustrated London News* before its appearance in book form. It is a work that has found many friends, but my recollection is that, as my mother foresaw, it was a good deal attacked by the critics, who were angry that, after Shakespeare's play, I should dare to write of Cleopatra. However, I have not kept any of the notices; indeed, I think I saw but few. Of professional critics already I began to feel a certain repletion. Little do these gentlemen know the harm that they do sometimes. A story comes into my mind in illustration of this truth. One day, years later, I was in the little writing-room of the Savile Club, that on the first floor with fern-cases in the windows where one may not smoke. At least, so things were when I ceased to be a member. Presently Thomas Hardy entered and took up one of the leading weekly papers, in which was a long review of his last novel. He read it, then came to me—there were no others in the room—and pointed out a certain passage.

"There's a nice thing to say about a man!" he exclaimed. "Well, I'll never write another novel."

And he never did.

By the way, the Savile was a very pleasant club in the late 'eighties. There was a certain table in the corner near the window where a little band of us were wont to lunch on Saturdays: Lang, Gosse, Besant, A. Ross, Loftie, Stevenson (the cousin of the writer), Eustace Balfour, and some others. Of this company the most are dead, though I believe Gosse still lunches there. He must feel himself to be a kind of monument erected over many graves. The last time that I visited the club there was not a soul in the place whom I knew. So, feeling lonely and over-oppressed by sundry memories, I sent in my resignation of membership. But often as I walk down Piccadilly I look at that table through the window and think of many things.

I think that about this time I must have become rather sickened of the novel-writing trade and despondent as regards my own powers. This I conclude from an undated and unaddressed note which I find among Lang's letters of the period. It runs:—

"DEAR HAGGARD,

"If you jack up Literature, I shall jack up Reading. *Of course* I know the stuff is the thing, but the ideal thing would be the perfection of stuff and the perfection of style, and we don't often get that; except from Henry Fielding. Yes, I believe in 'Jess,' but you can't expect me to be in love with *all* your women; the heart devoted to Ayesha has no room for more. Probably I think more highly of your books than you do, and I was infinitely more anxious for your success than for my own, which is not an excitement to me. But Lord love you, it would be log-rollery to say that in a review.

"Yours ever,
"A. L."

I have not the faintest idea of the genesis of this note. I presume, however, that Lang had aimed some of his barbed shafts at me, probably in conversation, and that I had written to him petulantly. Anyhow, his answer is most kind and nice.

"Allan Quatermain," after running through *Longmans' Magazine*, came out about the end of June, 1887. Charles Longman, in a letter dated June 20th, writes: "You have broken the record—at least so I am told. We have subscribed over ten thousand copies of 'Quatermain' in London, which they say is more than has ever been subscribed of a six-shilling novel before. . . . We printed twenty thousand of 'Quatermain,' as you know, and we are now ordering paper in readiness for another lot."

This tale proved, and has remained, a general favourite, the Zulu in it, old

Umslopogaas, being a very popular character with all classes of readers, and especially among boys.

Here, perhaps, I ought to give some account of Umslopogaas, whom I encountered in South Africa when he was acting as a kind of head native attendant to Sir Theophilus Shepstone. Umslopogaas—or, more correctly, M'hlopekazi—then a man of about sixty, was a Swazi of high birth. He was a tall, thin, fierce-faced fellow with a great hole above the left temple, over which the skin pulsated, that he had come by in some battle. He said that he had killed ten men in single combat, of whom the first was a chief called Shive, always making use of a battle-axe. However this may be, he was an interesting old fellow, from whom I heard many stories that Fynney used to interpret. I have availed myself of his personality to a considerable extent in various Zulu romances, and especially in "Allan Quatermain."

Cleopatra.

By permission of Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co.

One day, long after I had left Africa, he had a talk with Osborn, whom the natives called Mali-mat.

"Is it true, Mali-mat," asked Umslopogaas, "that Indanda (*i.e.*, myself) has been using my name largely in books that he has written?"

"Yes, it is true, Umslopogaas."

"So! Now what does Indanda do with the books when he has written them?"

"He sells them, Umslopogaas."

"Then, Malimat, say to the Inkoos Indanda when you meet him across the Black Water that, as he makes money by writing about me, it is right and just that he should send me half the money!"

I took the hint and sent him, not money, but a very fine hunting-knife with his name engraved upon it.

One other story is that not long before his death, which took place in 1897, Lady Hely-Hutchinson, the wife of the Governor of Natal, asked him whether he was not proud that his name should appear in books which the white men read all over the world.

"No, Inkoosikazi" (chieftainess), he answered, "to me it is nothing. Yet I am glad that Indanda has set my name in writing that will not be forgotten, so that, when my people are no more a people, one of them at least may be remembered."

I have a photograph of Umslopogaas which was taken the day before his death. The face might have served some Greek sculptor for the model of that of a dying god.

The following letter is from one who was a boy then, but has since become a

very famous man, namely, Mr. Winston Churchill. In it he expresses his critical opinion of "Allan Quatermain." To this I append a letter from his aunt, Lady Leslie, whom I used to know well, in which she expresses her critical opinion of Mr. Winston Churchill in his youth. I am sorry to say that I cannot remember whether the meeting she was trying to arrange did or did not take place.

"46, Grosvenor Square, W.

"DEAR MR. HAGGARD,

"Thank you so much for sending me 'Allan Quatermain'; it was so good of you. I like 'A. Q.' better than 'King Solomon's Mines'; it is more amusing.

"I hope you will write a great many more books.

"I remain

"Yours truly,

"WINSTON S. CHURCHILL."

"11, Stratford Place, W.

"11th Feb. /88.

"DEAR MR. HAGGARD,

"The little boy Winston came here yesterday morning, not having been in London on Sunday, and beseeching me to take him to see you before he returns to school at the end of the month. I don't wish to bore so busy a man as yourself, but will you, when you have time, please tell me, shall I bring him on Wednesday next, when Mrs. Haggard said she would be at home? Or do you prefer settling to come here some afternoon when I could have the boy to meet you? He really is a very interesting being, though temporarily *uppish* from the restraining parental hand being in Russia.

"Yours very truly,

"CONSTANCE LESLIE."

M'hlopekazi, a Swazi of high birth, who, as Umslopogaas, is such a popular character in many of Rider Haggard's stories.

By one of the saddest of all coincidences, if such things are pure coincidence, "Allan Quatermain" opens with a description of the death of Quatermain's only son. I dedicated it to *my* only son, and shortly afterwards that fate overtook him also!

I find letters from Lang imploring me not to kill Allan Quatermain. But when he wrote Allan had already been killed, and how could the end of the story be altered? Besides, his day was done and his tale told.

Before finally leaving the subject of "Cleopatra" I will quote a letter I received from W. E. Henley. I should here mention that I was well acquainted with this able and interesting man, some of whose poems will, I think, survive in our literature.

His letter is written from—

"11, Howard Place, Edinburgh.

20/7/89.

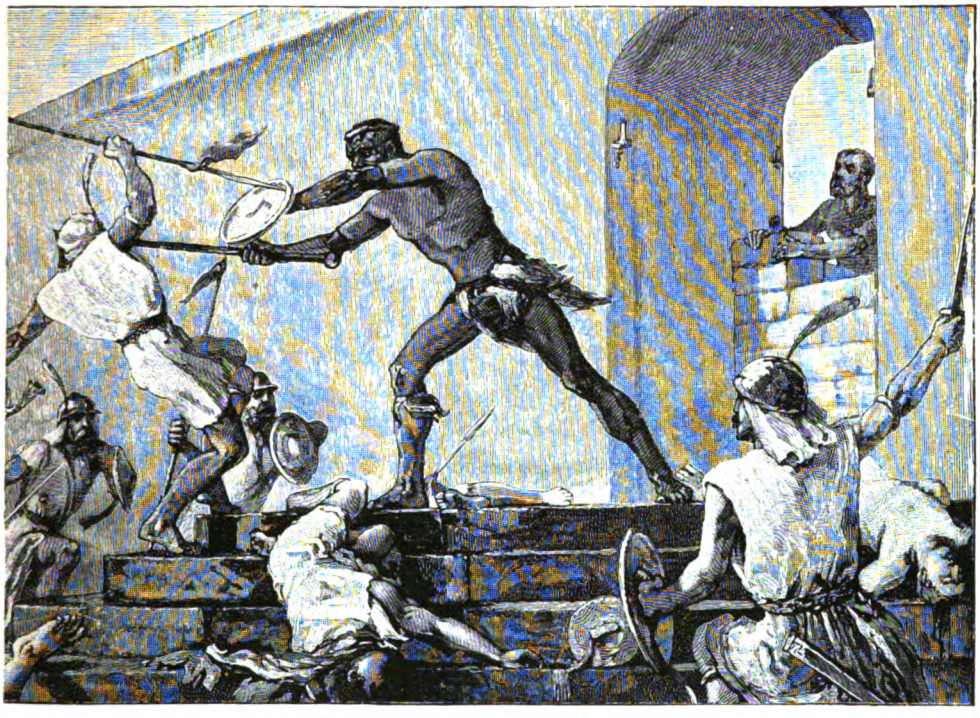
"MY DEAR HAGGARD,

"I got a week at Windermere and took 'Cleopatra' with me. I was alone, and I found her very good company.

"You were terribly handicapped by the inevitable comparison; but you came off better (to be frank) than I'd expected you would. The *invention* throughout is admirable—is good enough, indeed, to carry off the archæology and the archaical style, though they are both large orders.

"And in Charmion you have given us, I think your best creation; or if not that, a creation fit to rank with Umslopogaas and the King in 'Solomon's Mines.' And you know that I mean a good deal when I say that.

"I am glad to have read the book, and glad to have it by me to read again. It has plenty of faults, but it has an abundance of promise and some excellent—some really excellent—achievement. There is never a sign of exhaustion,



How Umslopogaas held the stair.
A famous scene from "Allan Quatermain."
By permission of Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co.

but, on the contrary, no end of proof that you have scarce got into your stride.

"Always yours,
"W. E. H."

After "Cleopatra" was finished I undertook various things. One was a tale called "Nesta Amor," which was never published, although I finished it. Indeed, I agree with Lang that it was not worth publishing in its existing form, though it might have been, perhaps, if rewritten, which I have never found time to do. Another was a romance of Helen to be written jointly with Lang, which, after many vicissitudes and adventures, ultimately materialized as "The World's Desire." Also I conceived the idea of writing a saga, but determined that before I attempted this I would visit Iceland and study the local colouring on the spot.

I remember that I was a good deal sneered at for my habit of actually investigating the countries where the events had happened about which I intended to write. Literature, I was told, should be independent of such base actualities. I do not at all agree with those critics. If a man wishes to produce a really good romance dealing with some past epoch, the best thing that he can do is to see the land in which the folk lived of whom he means to tell, and, as it were, soak himself in the surroundings that were their surroundings. So he may hope to catch something of the atmosphere which doubtless they took from their native earth and skies. Then, if he possesses any, imagination may do the rest. Who could write a saga who had not visited Iceland, or an Egyptian novel who did not know Egypt—I mean one worth reading?

Also I wrote a very successful little African story called "Maiwa's Revenge" and my novel "Beatrice," which I think one of the best bits of work I ever did.

But of "Beatrice" more later; let us return to "The World's Desire," "The Song of the Bow," as it was called at first.

Roughly, the history of this tale is that, first of all, Lang and I discussed it. Then I wrote a part of it, which part he altered or rewrote. Then in his casual manner he lost the whole MS. for a year or so; then it was unexpectedly found, and, encouraged thereby, I went on and wrote the rest.

Ultimately "The World's Desire" was published serially in *The New Review*. It appeared in book form in 1890, and I hope to speak of it again when I come to that date.

(To be continued.)

POKER-FACE

By

CARL CLAUSEN

ILLUSTRATED BY M. MACKINLAY

I.

AMONG the wax dummies in the show window of Whiting's Department Store stood a young man in faultless evening attire. His face was powdered and rouged into a cunning likeness of a dummy. Even his eyelashes were beaded, and his upper lip was a cupid's bow of deep carmine. By not as much as the twitching of an eyelid did he show the slightest sign of life. Only the minutest scrutiny betrayed the flesh and blood identity of the professional automaton among the waxen dummies.

The employment of such men for advertising purposes is perhaps not a new thing. You see them now and then in every large city, and they are always the object of much curiosity

The shoppers regarded the "dummy" with amusement, awe, and speculation, each according to his own temperament. They frankly stared, and the dummy stared back, imperturbably, impersonally, and without the slightest apparent interest in life other than that of

Among the wax dummies in the window stood a young man in faultless evening attire. By not so much as the twitching of an eyelid did he show the slightest sign of life.

displaying to best advantage the evening suit he wore.

It was hard to believe that warm human blood coursed under the wax-like pallor of his cheek, or that a heart beat under the spotless bulge of the pleated silk shirt.

A year or two earlier Sylvester Fensmark had been an artists' model. As such he had enjoyed a brief period of popularity among the attic-dwellers in the artists' colony. This popularity had been due not only to his perfect physique and his finely-chiselled features, but also to the fact that he had schooled himself to hold a pose for an almost unbelievable length of time.

His popularity as a model had been short-lived, however. He never knew the reason for this, and if someone had told him he would have scoffed at the idea. He was well satisfied with himself. While he did not in so many words express the idea that in being handsome and perfectly proportioned he had done his share for humanity, down in the deep recesses of his mind some such notion existed.

This was not strange. There had never been any period of his life when he was not petted or fussed over. Someone, usually a woman, had always strewn his path with roses. Suffering was unknown to him, and so arrogance and conceit held sway in the queer, warped little thing which was Sylvester's soul.

For a year or two he was the fashion among the artists, then one by one his patrons began to drop him. They drew and painted his remarkable limbs and torso and his cameo-like profile until wearied to the point of satiation with so much perfection. His face was so utterly devoid of expression and character that some wag dubbed him Poker-Face, and the name stuck.

His adversity did not sober him. He became embittered against the world which had given him a taste of prosperity, and which, in consequence, he now felt owed him a living.

In his extremity he considered various ways of collecting this debt, but dismissed them all as too hazardous.

II.

IT happened that one day his roving eye was attracted by an advertisement in the morning paper. As the advertisement seemed to be in his line, he made a note of the address, pulled his cap down over his eyes, and started for the place.

The proprietor looked him over from head to foot. His arms and wrists, thighs and ankles, were measured and his profile was studied from every angle.

" You'll do," the man said, briefly.

Sylvester found himself hired as a model for the manufacture of wax dummies. A plaster cast was taken of him, and from this cast wax dummies for show-window display purposes were made. For his services as the original he received one hundred dollars.

It was not long after this that as he passed a clothing shop he saw in the window one of these replicas of himself in wax. He paused and stared at it. He was not given to self-appraisal, but for one fleeting and disagreeable moment he saw something in the waxen face of the dummy that made him pause, or rather he saw nothing there, and that nothing made him pause.

When he turned away from the window and walked back to his room, there was a thoughtful look in his pale blue eyes. As he slunk down the street his mind was seething with the injustice of his position, and he was ripe for almost anything.

III.

IT was his likeness to the waxen dummies that made Vance, the busy and overworked general manager of Whiting's Department Store, pause in the midst of his multitudinous duties and stare at Sylvester when he presented himself with an application for employment on the strength of, one might say, the family resemblance. Mr. Vance's alert mind saw at once the possibilities of the situation from a publicity angle, and when Sylvester informed him that he had been an artists' model, he was hired on the spot for a period of ten weeks at a very good salary.

Sylvester had entered upon his new duties as an advertising automaton without any definite idea of how he could put the limited time of ten weeks to the best use. But he kept his eyes and ears open. By the time he had been working there four weeks, he had noted many things of interest to him, chief among these being the movements of Mr. Albert Cronin, the store's cashier.

Mr. Cronin's movements could hardly be called erratic. He arrived at the store at nine a.m., and spent seven hours wrestling with large sums of money that meant absolutely nothing to him except as units of the day's column of figures, which must be made to balance at the end of it. At four-thirty he departed for home, arriving there *viâ* subway express in exactly thirty-three minutes. At five-thirty he sat down to dinner, and at six-thirty he and Mrs. Cronin put on their hats and coats and went to a show or out to call on some neighbour, except when inclement weather kept them to their books or a game of some kind.

The life of the Cronins was about as exciting as the life of two silkworms in the same cocoon—and they were just as much wrapped up in each other. In the summer Mr. Cronin's route was changed slightly, once a week. The Cronins owned a small summer cottage at Rocky Ford, on the North Shore of Long Island, where Mrs. Cronin spent a four-month vacation, pumping water from a well six times a day and cooking on a coal-oil stove, and liking it.

On Saturday morning Mr. Cronin came out by the nine o'clock train and spent the week-end watching his young golden-haired wife fight a bumper crop of freckles with cold cream and hot towels. Mr. Cronin was hardly ancient himself. When pressed he would plead guilty to thirty-three Indian summers. He was a tall, slightly-stooped young man with a preoccupied manner. He walked with an air of carrying something fragile or easily broken. He was a country boy, and he had never quite recovered from his amazement when, after five years of service in the auditing department, Whitings had promoted him to cashier.

This was the man whose movements Sylvester watched with interest.

IV.

IN the basement of the big store a fireproof vault had been built, a room some fourteen feet wide by twenty feet long. In the far end of this room there was a large safe, with doors of manganese steel, and the outside door, leading into the vault itself, was a massive affair of the same material. In addition to its intricate locking devices, this outside door carried a burglar alarm and a time-lock. In the daytime the door was left open, as the vault was used as a storage place for the firm's old records. An elderly man in a grey uniform stood guard there during business hours, coming on duty at nine in the morning. One wall of the vault was occupied by a row of steel filing cabinets, the contents of which dated back over twenty years. Against the other stood some dozen or more wax figures. They were kept there partly because it was handy to the show

windows, and partly for lack of any other place to store them.

In his capacity as advertising automaton, Sylvester, as well as the window dressers, had access to the vault. He put on and removed his make-up here, screened from the gaze of the curious.

It was while he was engaged in removing it on the evening of the second Friday of his employment that Cronin came into the vault, almost on the stroke of four o'clock, accompanied by a bank messenger. Sylvester watched the cashier open the safe as he, Cronin, had been doing every Friday night for five years, count the money which was the firm's pay-roll for the week, sign for it, close the door of the safe, put a small black leather Gladstone bag on top of the filing cabinet, and leave for home. The black bag contained his shaving outfit, some library books, and his favourite silk pyjama suit. He would call for the bag at eight-forty-five Saturday morning, on his way to the station where he took the nine o'clock train to Rocky Ford.

From Friday evening until Saturday at ten a.m., when the pay-roll was made up, the safe held some sixty-odd thousand dollars. At no other time did it contain any more than sufficient change to begin business with the following day. The store's daily receipts were banked every evening just before closing time, by special arrangement with its bank.

As Sylvester noted these details, his mind became filled with the possibilities of the situation. He was not brilliant, but when a man has spent the best part of his life side-stepping hard work, his brain becomes at least as nimble as his feet.

For five consecutive Fridays he had spied on Cronin's movements, had followed him to his flat, had watched him enter the vault on Saturday mornings for his bag and depart for Rocky Ford with his black Gladstone bag after turning the day's business over to Lipke, his assistant. Sylvester also noted that Cronin kept the key of the bag tied to the handle with a piece of string. Further, that precisely at ten o'clock, Lipke, his pay-roll ready, came to the vault accompanied by a messenger girl and opened the safe.

Sylvester's pale blue eyes narrowed as he considered the possibilities of three-quarters of an hour between eight o'clock, when the time-lock automatically released the bolt of the vault door and the watchman opened it, and eight-forty-five, when Cronin called for his black Gladstone bag. Sixty thousand dollars put out at six per cent. was thirty-six hundred a year, or three hundred a month. Even in expensive New York a man could live very comfortably on such an income. He had no intention of bolting. To lose himself among the six million was an easy matter.

For weeks he toyed with the notion, but in the end he committed himself definitely to the idea of robbing the great Whiting Store of its sixty-thousand-dollar pay-roll.

V.

THE first thing he did was to buy a Gladstone bag identical with the one Cronin carried, a very common type. As the cashier's bag was nearly new, it was a simple matter to soil it slightly here and there, to conform with Cronin's. He also purchased a light brown wig and a complete set of woman's attire, explaining at the store where he bought the garments that he was a female impersonator, which the saleswoman who waited on him was ready enough to believe when he had been fitted.

After putting the clothes into the bag, he walked down to the station and deposited it, ready for the day when he would need it. On his way home he bought a small can of quickly-drying brown paint and a small brush.

He was now ready.

He timed himself for the *coup* on the Friday one week before his contract with the store expired. During the day he made a few simple arrangements vital to the success of his plan.

It was his habit to dress two of the wax figures in the vault in outfits in exact duplicate of the one which he was to demonstrate that day, and let the window-trimmers carry the figures to the show window for him, the idea of the publicity stunt being to see if the public could tell Sylvester from the two dummies. His phenomenal ability to remain motionless, and the fact that he always picked out two figures of which he himself was the original, made this no easy task, and he had become almost a personage among the shoppers, which flattered his vanity not a little.

On the Friday evening in question, after having asked for the Saturday morning off—the store closing at noon—he entered the vault from the show window, with his make-up still on his face. Against the wall nearest the safe stood a wax figure in an evening suit, dressed by himself during the morning, in accordance with his plans. Sylvester pottered about the vault and walked in and out between it and the stairway to the show windows to impress the guard with his frequent passing back and forth, and thus confusing the aged man.

At five minutes to four Sylvester went into the vault for the last time. He glanced out of the open door to assure himself that the guard's back was turned, then he stepped

backward quickly, and stood motionless against the wall beside the wax figure which he had dressed during the day for this purpose, his face turned towards the door of the safe.

As he stood there waiting for Cronin and the bank messenger to enter, his nerve

forefinger on the knob, he was so close to Sylvester that Fensmark could almost have reached out his hand and touched him.

The cashier began turning the knob of the combination. As the numbers came up, Sylvester read them off over the man's

It seemed an age before Cronin came into the vault, followed by the bank

almost failed him. For the first time in his life he found difficulty in remaining motionless. His heart pounded against his ribs and his brain fairly reeled with fear for the success of his plan.

It seemed that an age had passed before Cronin came into the vault carrying his black Gladstone bag and followed by the armed bank messenger lugging a bulging canvas sack. Cronin walked straight to the safe, looking neither to the right nor to the left. As he bent forward with thumb and

shoulder, six—nine—two—seven—four—one. He had, of course, no opportunity to jot them down. The slightest movement would have betrayed him. So he kept repeating the numbers to himself, six—nine—two—seven—four—one, over and over again.

Interminable minutes passed while Cronin checked over the bundles of currency from the list which the messenger had given him. When the cashier finally signed the list and the messenger departed, Sylvester

almost laughed out loud from sheer relief. Cronin closed the door of the safe, gave the combination a twirl or two, picked up the black bag containing his week-end toilet necessities and library book, and put it on top of one of the filing cases, as was his habit. He started for the door. Half-

messenger lugging a bulging canvas sack. Cronin walked straight to the safe.

way across the floor he paused and, adjusting his glasses, glanced about the poorly-lighted compartment as if divining by some sixth sense that all was not well.

Sylvester had a bad thirty seconds while the cashier stood peering at him in the half light. He nearly collapsed when Cronin crossed to the safe again and gave the handle one final tug to assure himself against his instinct that nothing was amiss.

The next moment the cashier had passed out of the vault, and Sylvester breathed normally once more. For forty-five minutes he stood motionless beside his brother in the wax and repeated the numbers six—nine—two—seven—four—one in endless repetition, lest he should forget them. He did not dare to turn his head to see if the watchman had forgotten his presence. When a messenger girl came into the vault to consult one of the filing cases, his heart almost stood still. But she, too, like Cronin, passed out after giving him a cursory glance, and the vault became again still as the grave.

Then the five o'clock bell rang. He heard the door of the vault close, and the clanging of the bolt as the watchman shot it into place. Then silence, final and absolute, broken only by the ticking of the timing-

clock in the locking mechanism of the massive manganese vault door.

With a sigh of relief Sylvester relaxed and went about the business of transferring the sixty-thousand-dollar pay-roll from the safe to Cronin's Gladstone bag. He had plenty of time. The cashier's personal belongings he transferred to the pockets of his own overcoat in the locker, and the library book he laid on one of the shelves until morning. He had hardly done this when the light was turned out. He was prepared for this. Producing a candle from his pocket, he lit it, placed it in some drippings on the floor in front of the safe, and began to spin the knob slowly, reading the numbers off from memory, six—nine—two—seven—four—one.

As number one came up, the faint click of the tumblers made his nerves tingle with anticipation. Grasping the handle of the door firmly with both hands, he turned it and gave it a brisk tug. The massive door swung open noiselessly on its well-oiled hinges, and with a suddenness that almost upset him.

The transfer of the bundles of yellow bank-notes to the Gladstone bag was the work of a few moments. He was forced to leave several packages behind, as he did not dare to stuff the bag too full, lest Cronin should notice it and become suspicious of its weight and bulk.

Locking the bag, he turned it over on its side and took from the locker the small can of brown paint and the brush. With this he painted the initials J. M. on the bottom of the bag. Then he pulled the string, by which the key was attached, off the handle, and put the bag on top of the filing case, bottom side up, to permit the paint to dry.

Next he doubled up the carpet which led from the vault door to the safe, and with this as a mattress and his coat as a pillow he prepared to spend the night as comfortably as was possible in the circumstances. Breaking the candle from its drippings, he removed all traces of the hardened candle grease from the floor. Before blowing the light out he glanced at his watch. The hands pointed to five-fifty-five. A long night lay ahead of him, but he did not dare to keep the light burning another minute. He knew that the tiny flame of the candle was using up twice as much air as he himself was. For the same reason smoking was out of the question. The small grated vent in the ceiling carried off the foul air. A certain limited amount of fresh air entered there, but in the main he had to rely on the air already in the vault, so he extinguished the light and curled himself up on his improvised bed.

VI.

HE awoke with a start and sat up. His head was spinning from the close air of the vault, and the blood pounded in his ear-drums. A sense of extreme oppression and lassitude gripped him. Fumbling for matches, he found them, struck one, and looked at his watch. It was a little past seven o'clock. He shuddered at the thought of what would have happened if he had overslept.

Lighting the candle, he rose and made his preparations for getting away. He examined Cronin's bag and found that the painted initials were dry, so he righted the bag, after assuring himself once more that it was locked securely. Next he went about putting things in order, rolled the carpet back in place, and brushed his clothes carefully. Then he attended to his make-up, which had been sadly wrecked during the night. He was an artist at this, and he used his rouge and lip-stick with discretion. After a few minutes' skilful manipulation, he stepped back and surveyed himself in the mirror. He smiled with satisfaction. He thought of what would happen to the absent-minded cashier. The notion amused him vastly. Cronin would get his surprise with a vengeance.

His musings were interrupted by the sudden switching on of the light in the ceiling. Blowing out the candle, hastily he removed every last trace of his nocturnal occupation of the vault and stepped into line beside the dressed wax figure. He had not long to wait when the clockwork mechanism released the bolt and the vault door was opened.

He waited for a few minutes until he heard the watchman's steps retreat in the distance. Listening, he tiptoed to the door and glanced out. The great basement was empty except for a janitor or two, sweeping the floor and removing the covers from the display tables.

Quick as a flash he stepped back to his locker and changed into his street clothes and removed his make-up with a towel and cold cream. While he was stuffing Cronin's things and the rouge and lip-stick into his pockets, Moore, one of the window-trimmers, came into the vault. Moore nodded to Sylvester.

"I thought you were off duty to-day," he said.

"I am," Sylvester replied, easily. He took Cronin's library books from the shelf and tucked them under his arm. "I forgot these last night and came back for them."

The window-trimmer picked up one of the undressed wax figures and the two men left the vault together.

"Have a good time," said Moore, as

Sylvester passed up the stairway and into the street.

"Leave it to me," Sylvester called back over his shoulder with a grin.

At the next corner Sylvester hailed a taxi.

Five minutes later he presented himself at the station luggage office for the bag, then walked down to the waiting-room and took a seat from which he could watch the swinging entrance doors without being observed himself.

At eight minutes to nine Cronin came through the farthest door and walked directly to gate 18. Sylvester got up and sauntered after him, at a safe distance. He followed the cashier through the gate and down the stairway to the platform. Cronin entered the front end of the third car. Sylvester waited until the man had selected his seat, then he boarded the car from the rear end. The morning traffic was not heavy. Sylvester waited on the platform between the two cars until the train pulled out and the conductor had unlocked the door of the women's wash room; then, making sure that he was not being observed, he slipped into the room and locked the door.

Changing clothes and making up in the small compartment was no easy task, and the train was already under way when he put the finishing touches on with his rouge and lip-stick. His own suit he wrapped in a piece of brown paper, after removing Cronin's things from the pockets and transferring them, together with the library books, to the now empty Gladstone bag.

A few minutes later Mr. Cronin glanced up from his morning paper to see a woman put her bag on the rack above his head next to his own. When the woman took the vacant seat beside him, his eyes returned to his paper. He did not want to be caught staring. He noted the brown-paper parcel in her lap, also through the veil she wore that she was young, and that her face was made up in the prevailing fashion. His disapproval of flappers amounted to an obsession, so he hunched his shoulders and buried himself in the market report of the cotton and wool exchange.

The run to Jamaica, Long Island, where passengers change for the North and South Shores, is only a matter of twenty minutes. When the train slowed down, his travelling companion rose and reached for her bag in the rack.

Cronin glanced up.

"You have the wrong bag, madam," he said.

The woman had already taken it down. She glanced from the one in the rack to the one in her hand, then turned the latter over.

"These are my initials," she said. "My name is Jane Mason."

Cronin adjusted his glasses. He stared at the J. M. painted in brown letters on the bottom of the bag.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said, flushing to the roots of his hair. "The two bags are so much alike that I thought for the moment——"

"Aren't they?" the girl agreed. She smiled at him brightly, then passed down the car.

Cronin sat staring at the bag above his head. He could have sworn that he had put it in the middle of the rack, instead of at the far end. The train coming to a stop, he rose and took it down. As he did so something dropped to the floor and fell between the seats. Stooping, he picked it up. It was his key with the piece of string attached. He decided that it had become caught in the meshes of the net, and had been torn off the handle as he lifted the bag down. He kept it tied to the handle for fear of misplacing it. He never carried anything of value in the bag.

Putting the key in his vest pocket, he left the car. As he hurried across the crowded platform he saw his travelling companion board a South Shore train on the opposite track.

In his seat in the North Shore train a few minutes later he took the key from his vest pocket, opened his bag, took out one of his library books, and settled down for an hour and a half's reading. By the time he got to Mineola he had forgotten all about the episode.

VII.

IT was a little after eleven o'clock when the train pulled into Rocky Ford. Cronin put his book away, shut the bag, and with his overcoat on his arm sauntered down the aisle. As he stepped off the train someone tapped him on the shoulder. He turned, thinking that it was his wife. Instead he found himself looking into the face of Jim Hathaway, the village constable. He was about to extend his hand in greeting, but the look on the constable's face made him pause. His first thought was his wife, and that something had happened to her.

"What is it, Jim?" he asked, anxiously. "Anything wrong at the house?"

The constable shook his head.

"Come to my office," he said. "We can talk better there."

Cronin stared at him. From the expression on Hathaway's face, the cashier knew that something serious was afoot. The constable's office was not far from the railway station. The cashier followed him there without a word. When they were

seated, Hathaway pulled out a telegram and handed it to Cronin, who read the following message :—

" Detain Albert Cronin, cashier of the Whiting Company, when he arrives on the nine o'clock train. Suspected of absconding with pay-roll. Am coming by motor with warrant."

The wire, which was dated an hour earlier, was signed : " R. W. Thain, Chief of Detectives."

Cronin laid the piece of paper on the desk. His face was the colour of chalk. His lips worked. He seemed bereft of utterance.

" They must be crazy ! " he finally managed to say.

Hathaway nodded. The two men were friends. They went fishing together often. He felt sorry for Cronin.

" You don't mind waiting here until Thain comes ? " he asked, almost apologetically.

The cashier drew a deep breath. In spite of the other's kindly manner he knew that he was a prisoner, and that Hathaway had couched his words in the terms of a request to give him—Cronin—a chance to save his face.

" Certainly not, Jim," he said in a low, steady voice.

IT was not long before Robert W. Thain entered Hathaway's office.

" This is Mr. Cronin," Hathaway said, indicating the white-faced cashier in the chair beside him.

"Ah, yes," said Thain. He drew the warrant from his pocket and read it aloud. "Anything you say will be used against you," he added, according to formula.

" I've nothing to say except that it is all a—a terrible mistake," Cronin stammered.

" I see," said Thain. He nodded as if agreeing with the cashier.

" But—but——" Cronin started to protest. He was interrupted by the opening of the door. He closed his mouth. In the open doorway stood Fanny, his wife.

Mrs. Cronin's eyes travelled about the room. They came to rest upon her husband's face. She was about to take a step forward, but the expression she saw there deterred her.

" I waited for fifteen minutes, then came over. The station-master said you were here. Is there anything wrong, Bert ? Lunch is on the table."

Hathaway cleared his throat. He glanced at Thain, who was folding up the warrant and returning it to his pocket. Cronin looked at his wife in beseeching silence as she crossed the room and picked up his Gladstone bag.

" Just a moment," Thain barked out. His hand shot forward and gripped the handle of the bag.

The girl looked up in surprise as Cronin blurted out :—

" They think that I've stolen the pay-roll, Honey ! "

" Well, yes," Thain admitted at the girl's horror-stricken look. " Naturally we're interested in the contents of this bag."

Cronin laughed hollowly.

" Open it ! " he cried.

Thain held out his hand for the key and Cronin tossed it to him with a snort. The detective inserted it in the lock, which was of a standard make. The bag flew open. Thain peered within, then turned the bag upside down and dumped the contents out on the constable's desk.

" H'm ! Well," he said as he pawed over the articles, " that doesn't mean anything." To himself he added : " Our bird's slipped the swag to an accomplice somewhere along the line."

Mrs. Cronin looked over his shoulder. With housewifely concern she pushed Thain aside and began smoothing out the rumpled silk pyjama suit. As she did so a small object fell out of it and dropped to the floor. She picked it up. Her white even teeth came together with a snap. Tense with suspicion, she held the object out in the palm of her hand.

" Bert," she said in a small, terrible voice, " how did that lip-stick come to be wrapped up in your pyjama suit ? "

Cronin swallowed hard. He stared at the thing with bulging eyes. This was the straw that broke the camel's back.

" I don't know," he roared, " and I don't care a damn ! "

Thain and Hathaway exchanged glances. The merest shadow of a smile flitted across the detective's face.

" My car is outside, Cronin," he said, gently.

The cashier glanced at his wife, who was scooping the objects off the desk into the bag. He rose just as she snapped the lock shut. Thain held out his right hand, from which a pair of bright steel handcuffs dangled.

" Sorry," he said, pleasantly, as Cronin shrank back. " Orders are orders."

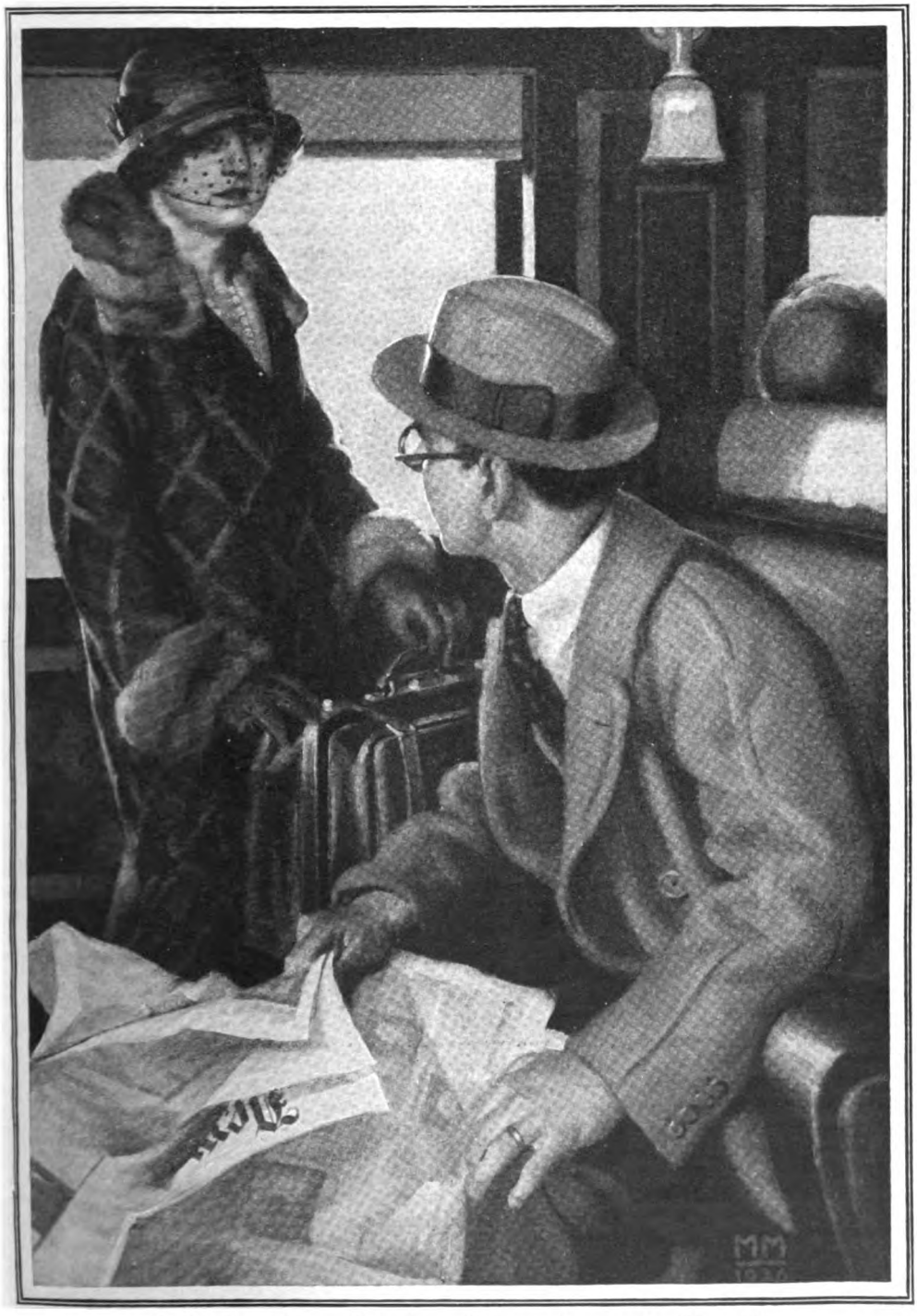
Cronin hesitated for the fraction of a moment, then held out his hands without a word. As the slender steel bands closed with a brisk click, Mrs. Cronin said :—

" I'll come with you."

Cronin started to protest.

" Please, Fanny, everything is all right. It's all a ghastly mistake——"

His wife shot Thain a look of contempt that made the detective's black eyes narrow



Cronin glanced up. "You have the wrong bag, madam," he said.

angrily. He made up his mind that the girl would bear watching.

"Of course, Bert," she said. Her small, clenched fist relaxed enough for Hathaway to get a glimpse of the crimson object that glowed dully between her white, bloodless fingers. The constable dropped his eyes guiltily. "The idea of them accusing you of theft—after ten years of faithful service." She paused and gave her husband a curious level glance. "I have a little business matter to attend to in New York myself, so I'll go with you."

"Well, then, let's be on our way," said Thain, briskly.

VIII.

SYLVESTER spent the day travelling pleasantly and leisurely along the South Shore of Long Island to Montauk Point.

He was in a cheerful, almost jocular mood. Everything had gone off without a hitch. There was not the slightest chance that suspicion would be directed his way. Only three men knew the combination of the safe: Cronin, Lipke, and Vance, the general manager—that is to say, only three men besides Sylvester. That in itself was a formidable alibi.

He congratulated himself heartily upon his cleverness. Glancing at his wrist watch, he noted that it was ten o'clock. Lipke would just about be opening the safe now. Sylvester smiled as he pictured to himself the expression on the face of the assistant cashier on finding that the safe had been rifled.

The suspicion would naturally fall on Cronin, the only man of the three possessing the combination who had occasion to go to the vault.

The run to Montauk Point is a matter of four hours from New York, and it was two hours before another train left for the city. Sylvester had ascertained this in advance. It fitted his plan nicely. He got off the train and wandered down to the beach and sat on the sands. He did not wish to arrive at his room in New York with the bag until after dark, and he did not dare to change his clothes for fear that he might run into some one of the fifteen hundred *employés* of the big store and be recognized. The black bag, innocent enough in the hands of a strange woman, would not be so innocent in his own.

On the way back to town some hours later, Sylvester leaned back in the car seat and inhaled the fresh, salty Atlantic air that stole through the half-open window and fanned his veil.

AT the same time that Sylvester was travelling back to New York a little determined woman, with golden hair, wide pansy-blue eyes, a lip-stick clutched in her small hand, and shadowed by a heavy-set man, wearing a bowler hat and turquoise stickpin, walked briskly down Fifth Avenue.

The man was one of Thain's detectives. Thain never missed a chance, and the little woman's determination to come along to New York had set him thinking. Like another famous detective, his motto was "Watch the Woman," so when Mrs. Cronin left the Ludlow Street police-station after bidding a tearful good-bye to her husband, Calahan took up her trail.

Calahan had the temperament of a mastiff. Persistence was his long suit.

When Mrs. Cronin turned down a side street and went into a corner chemist's shop, the picture, "Public Telephone," instantly flashed across Calahan's brain, so he followed her through the door, intent upon capturing a position near the booth and an incriminating earful.

He was disappointed. Mrs. Cronin went directly to the shop-walker and engaged that individual in earnest conversation. Calahan strained his ears, and, not to appear to be eavesdropping, bought himself something at the counter. Out of the tail of his eye he saw the girl open her handbag and draw from it a tiny object, crimson at one end.

The shop-walker adjusted his glasses and peered at the thing as if it were some new entomological specimen presented to him for classification. Calahan heard him say:—

"It was undoubtedly purchased here, madam, since our trade mark is on it, but by whom I cannot say. We have a great many customers who buy such things."

"But this is a theatrical lip-stick, not an ordinary one," the girl replied. "This shop is far away from the theatrical district. Perhaps one of your assistants might know who is in the habit of buying her make-up articles here."

The shop-walker handed her back the lip-stick with a bored air.

"It is possible, madam, though I doubt it. However, you are at liberty to try the cosmetics department."

Mystified, Calahan sauntered down the second aisle in the trail of his quarry. At the counter adjoining the cosmetics department he bought himself something else he didn't really want.

There were two girls at the cosmetics counter. To the first one Mrs. Cronin stated her errand. The girl shook her head.

"I don't know Mrs. Fiske—personally," she reported flippantly, "but I know she doesn't live near here, and besides, I'm new here." She turned. "Say, Kitty," she sang out over her shoulder to her companion in misery, "d'ye know of any soobrette that buys her war-paint here, regularly?"

Kitty joined the conference and examined the lip-stick.

"I haven't sold one of them lip-sticks in a month of Sundays," said Kitty. "That guy from Whiting's who imitates the wax dolls bought the last two we had a month ago, and ordered two more, which he never called for. Was you wantin' them, lady?"

The "lady" stated that she wasn't. At the word "Whiting's" she tensed and Calahan pricked up his ears.

"Thank you," she said, briefly, and left the store.

Straight as a homing pigeon she made for Whiting's Store, and as unerringly for the side door, where the night watchman, recognizing her, let her in. Calahan was left to speculate upon the advisability of demanding admittance and of arresting the man, then and there, as an accomplice in the robbery.

A full fifteen minutes had passed when Mrs. Cronin emerged. In her hand she carried a slip of paper. Without looking to the right or to the left, she started for the subway entrance at the corner, and disappeared. Calahan followed. She boarded a train. So did Calahan. At Christopher Street she got off. Calahan alighted also. Up the stairway she flew, and dived into Bleecker Street, where her husband lodged, with Calahan at her heels.

IX.

SYLVESTER was seated on the edge of his bed in his attic room, congratulating himself upon having slipped upstairs twenty minutes before, without being observed. He had discarded his feminine garb, and a contemplative cigarette glowed between his lips. It was the first smoke he had dared to indulge in that day, and he abandoned himself profoundly to the enjoyment of it, and to the prospects of the future, as embodied in the Gladstone bag at his feet.

His contract with the store would be up at the end of the following week. He had no intention of breaking it by flight. Going back to work the following Monday as if nothing had happened was part of his carefully-laid plan. Never for a moment would he be suspected.

He had just decided upon the make of car he intended to purchase, after a suitable time had elapsed, when someone knocked on the door. He tensed.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"A friend," a feminine voice replied.

Sylvester's heart dropped like a plummet. He had heard of female detectives.

"What d'you want?" he asked hoarsely.

"I want to speak to you. It's important," the voice replied.

Sylvester glanced from the Gladstone to the window. Escape that way was impossible. The window was three storeys from the ground. He did some quick thinking. His only chance, he decided, lay in bluffing.

"Just a minute," he said.

He kicked the black bag and the feminine garments under the bed and opened the door six inches. Under the stairway gas-jet stood a young woman with hair the colour of corn silk, and eyes that showed visibly blue, even in the gloom of the passage. Sylvester grinned from sheer relief and opened the door wider. No female tec this, he decided.

"Hullo, kid," he said from force of habit.

His visitor glanced about the room with evident disapproval.

"You're Mr. Fensmark, I assume?" she asked.

Sylvester admitted, cautiously, that he was.

The girl's blue eyes narrowed, and Sylvester decided that they were not so beautiful as he had thought at first. He watched her like a cat while she opened her handbag, and took from it a small object which she tossed upon the table.

"I suppose you recognize this?" she said in a voice tense with suppressed emotion.

Sylvester sucked his breath in sharply. He stared at the lip-stick fascinatedly, his mind turning handsprings.

The girl leaned across the table, her shoulders hunched and the venom of outraged wifehood in her eyes.

"If I catch your wife fooling with my husband again, I'll kill her," she said.

Sylvester backed away instinctively, his cigarette drooping askew between his bloodless lips.

"My—wife!" he ejaculated, almost in a whisper.

"Yes, your wife! You needn't try to shield her!"

The girl's eyes strayed to the woman's hat and veil on the chair in the corner, which Sylvester had overlooked in his hurry. She shot him a quick glance, then crossed the room swiftly, flung the cupboard door wide open, and peered within.

Sylvester stood looking from the veiled hat on the chair to the girl, his mind working like lightning, and cursing himself silently for his carelessness in having dropped the lip-stick among Cronin's things. Assuming the *rôle* of betrayed husband, according to the cue from the girl, he said:—

"She's gone out to do some shopping. Leave her to me. I'll settle with her when she comes back."

He jerked the hat from the chair, as if in righteous anger, and tossed it on the bed. The girl picked up the lip-stick from the

table, returned it to her purse, and sat down on the chair.

" I'll wait," she announced.

Sylvester's hand dropped to his side. He was not prepared for this contingency.

" She said that she might stay at—at her mother's for an hour or so," he ventured.

" I've got plenty of time," the girl assured him.

He glanced at her in silent consternation. Immediate and speedy flight was imperative. Through the absurd mistake of a jealous woman, his carefully-laid plan was in danger of being wrecked. It was only a question of hours before suspicion would be directed towards him. It was necessary to get rid of his visitor at once.

One of the ground-floor lodgers, prowling about in the hall below, gave him an inspiration.

" That's her," he said under his breath. " Quick, get into the cupboard there ! I'll question her, and you can listen. We'll get her with the goods."

Mrs. Cronin arose and stood listening uncertainly for a moment, then crossed the room, and Sylvester almost pushed her into the cupboard. When he turned the key upon her, softly, cold beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead.

To change back into his female garb was the work of a few moments. His prisoner in the cupboard, realizing that she had been tricked, pounded upon the door with her fists. Sylvester jerked the black bag from under the bed and left the room, locking the door behind him.

WHEN Calahan, leaning against a friendly fire-hydrant, saw a heavily-veiled woman, carrying a black Gladstone bag, emerge from the doorway through which his quarry had disappeared, he lost no time in taking up the trail. Before she had proceeded two hundred feet down Bleecker Street, he was abreast of her.

" Can I carry your bag—sister ? " he asked, assuming the masher *rôle*.

The veiled one whirled about with a very unladylike snarl. The instinctive motion with which she transferred the bag to the other hand was not lost upon Calahan.

" Chase yourself," she said briefly.

Calahan showed his badge. The result was all that he had hoped for, and more than he had bargained for. The veiled-one's free fist shot out and caught him on the point of the jaw with astonishing force and precision for a lady. Calahan staggered back, more surprised than hurt by the unexpectedness of the attack, and his assailant took to his heels. Before the astonished officer could gather speed in pursuit, the woman had turned the corner and was disappearing down a dark alley with the bag.

Calahan sent two shots from his automatic after the flying legs. Both went wide. Down the alley and around two more corners, then back into Bleecker Street Sylvester sped, with the officer emptying the pistol in his wake. Westward to the docks, through winding streets and dark alleys, Calahan slacking up his speed now and then to reload, and Sylvester to gather up the impeding skirts about his legs, hugging the black bag tightly in his arms.

Necks were craned from attic windows. Hatless basement dwellers scurried from their burrows, and popped hastily back again as stray bullets from Calahan's gun sent showers of plaster about their ears.

The race ended in the angle of one of the piers. Calahan snapped the handcuffs about Sylvester's wrists and picked up the bag.

" All right, sister," he said, grimly ; " let's travel."

X.

IN his little cubby-hole of an office the chief of detectives was grilling Albert Cronin for the second time that day. Thain was worried. The cashier's story had all the ear-marks of a straight one, and his manner, although frightened, was not that of a guilty man. Thain was forced to admit to himself. For hours he had questioned Cronin with all the skill at his command, but without tripping him once. The cashier stuck to his story and answered every question put to him frankly and without a moment's hesitation.

There was a commotion in the passage, and the door was flung open.

" Begging your pardon, sir, for not knocking, but my hands are that full I couldn't," said Calahan. He shoved the manacled and bedraggled Sylvester through the door and pushed him into a chair. The black bag he put on Thain's desk ; then reported.

" The loot's in the bag," he finished, as he laid the key on the desk and mopped his brow. " He owned up. I scared it out of him in the train," he added, nodding at Sylvester.

Thain stared from one to the other of the three. Then he picked up the key without a word, inserted it in the lock of the bag, and opened it.

" It's all there, sir," said Calahan. " I counted the bundles." He indicated the cashier, who had adjusted his glasses and was peering at Sylvester, cringing in his chair. " Cronin and his wife had nothing to do with it. This bird was playing a lone hand."

" By Jove ! " said Cronin, more to himself than to Sylvester. " You're the lady with

The girl leaned across the table. "If I catch your wife fooling with my husband again, I'll kill her," she said.

The veiled-one's free fist shot out and caught Calahan on the point of the jaw. He staggered back, more surprised than hurt by the unexpectedness of the attack.

the black bag who changed trains at Jamaica this morning."

"Lady—is good," said Calahan, rubbing his jaw, reflectively. He lifted the veil of Sylvester's hat.

"Good Heavens!" said Cronin, "it's the dummy."

He turned on Calahan. "Where's my wife?" he demanded.

"Well," said Calahan, jerking his thumb at Sylvester, "his nibs says that he's got her locked up in his cupboard, but he's such a liar I wouldn't take no stock in it. I figured it was only a try-on to get me to go back there."

Cronin leaped to his feet and grasped the recoiling Sylvester by the neck.

"You thieving little cad," he stormed, "where's my wife?"

There was a knock on the door.

" What is it, Jim ? " Thain asked, impatiently, of the plain-clothes officer who answered his " come in."

" Lady to see you, sir," the man said. " It's his wife," he added, in a low tone, pointing to Cronin. " I told her you were busy, but she insists on seeing you."

" All right, Jim, bring her in," the inspector said.

Mrs. Cronin entered. When she saw Sylvester, she stopped.

" She—he," Cronin corrected, as he crossed to her side and put his arm about her, " said that you were locked in his cupboard."

Mrs. Cronin glanced at the face of her husband. She drew a deep breath of reassurance.

" I was," she replied, " but the landlady let me out." She might have added that from the same source she had gleaned certain information anent the mythical Mrs. Fensmark that had made her ears burn with guilt at her unjust suspicions of her husband. The desk-sergeant downstairs and the populace of Bleecker Street had supplied the details of Calahan's exciting chase, and the arrest.

Being a wise little woman as well as a very penitent one, she said :—

" I knew you were innocent, Bert, the moment I saw the lip-stick."

" Ye-ah," said Mr. Cronin, " you're some little detective."

Thain winked at Calahan, and Calahan returned the wink solemnly.

" All right, Calahan, take your man downstairs," the inspector said, with a nod at Sylvester. " Report to me later, son," he added, kindly.

" Yes, sir," said Calahan. He hooked an efficient index finger into Sylvester's collar. " Come on, Fitzsimmons."

WHEN the door had closed on the officer and his prisoner, Thain cleared his throat. Some sort of amends were due to Cronin and his wife, but Thain knew that it was beyond his power to make them. He had been ordered to make the arrest on a warrant sworn out by the Whiting Company. He had simply done his duty, but cases like the present one made him wonder if he ought not to retire and devote his time to his apple orchard. He opened the drawer of his desk and took from it a box of cigars, which he pushed across the desk to Cronin.

" My car is at your service," he told them. " I'll get one of the boys to drive you home."

Cronin said : " I don't smoke, thanks," and the girl opened her handbag.

" I thought you might like to have this as—exhibit A," she said, sweetly, as she dropped the lip-stick into Thain's palm.

Next month:—

SUMMER FICTION NUMBER

Stories by—

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ARNOLD BENNETT

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

STACY AUMONIER

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

DENIS MACKAIL,

etc., etc.

"PINK-LEGS"

There is no love for us who play at love,
There is no hate for us who play at hate;
For we are three parts serpent, one part dove,
And all we sigh for comes too late, too late!

J. ARDEN.

Where the bus stopped she took another, following a young man with a box marked "Eggs."

ON the eleventh day of May the English winter was over and spring had come in with a sudden and surprising glory. More like summer; as though this amazing climate had skipped a season and were laughing at the pessimists who decried it. That day had opened with a cloudless sky and a sun that shone—actually shone! Muriel Wendover, the famous American movie star, warmed both hands at it, and so did Cherry Cazalet, her director. The two were over in London, making pictures with an English background. They had been there several months, Muriel living her parts as well as playing in them; for Muriel was a great artist, one of the greatest, who believed more fully

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By

ALBERT KINROSS

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

in life than in the studios; and as Cherry Cazalet believed in Muriel, believed most utterly in Muriel, he gave full weight to all that she proposed.

To-day, on the eleventh of May, with the sun shining and spring so suddenly arrived, "I'm sick of this old London," said Muriel; "we're going to do a picture of their countryside. I've heard and read a lot about the English country; I'm going to look for it right now."

"You could ask one of your swell friends to invite you down for a bit," suggested Cherry.

"And be a showpiece in a house-party! No, thank you! I want the real country, as it actually is. It'll be an adventure. Then we'll make a story of it and put it on. Real—real—real! That's what I'm after. Surely you ought to know!"

"I do know, Muriel; but, you going off alone—why, anything may happen!"

"I want it to happen; that's where the fun comes in. Good art is always the unexpected; bad art is just the same old stuff over and over again."

"Well, have it your own way," he said, "and if you're stuck or in any kind of a fix just send for Cherry. He'll come in his racing automobile, no matter when and where."

Muriel had packed a suit-case with country clothes; she drove now to Westminster Bridge and waited. She drove to the bridge because she had seen the omnibuses cross over, those that went the long journeys of twenty or thirty miles out of town, and there linked up with other buses that took you on and on till you reached the sea. That was the joke of living in an island; wherever you went you couldn't go very far, for, sooner or later, you always reached the sea.

She chose a bus marked Godstone and climbed on top. She was wearing flesh-coloured silk stockings, thick shoes with low heels, a short dress and a short coat that left her long, slim legs exposed, and a little hat of soft leather that covered her shingled head. She had a thin raincoat on her arm and enough things in the suit-case to last out a week, and a wad of money in her bag, and a light heart. Such was Muriel Wendover on this May morning; just a young girl as pretty as a picture. In the last film they had made she had been an orphan, pale and hungry and pathetic and all in threadbare black; but to-day she had dried her tears and come out smiling. That was the way with her, a young woman of many aspects. Most movie stars are fixed stars and always the same, but Muriel was a planet that changed with every changing part, and to-day she was an image of that very spring itself which had beckoned to her and called her out o' doors with its wonderful piping. The bus crossed the sunlit river and carried her onward.

First came the many miles of London, now packed, then spreading, next interspersed with fields. At Croydon it was left behind and they heard the first skylark. An apple-tree in blossom promised more; and soon, in truth, Muriel was looking down on orchards, on meadows gold and white with buttercups and daisies, and there were sheep and cows. A cuckoo called out of a coppice, a plover circled, crying "Pee-wit!" She stretched her long pink legs, took out a cigarette, and, "It's coming," she said. At Godstone the bus stopped and she ate her luncheon.

IT hadn't been real country so far, and she knew it. Too many "swell" houses, as Cherry would say, too many parks, everything too much brushed and combed, and people on the roads like the people you found in cities. In one place they had passed a picture-palace, with herself on the bills that were stuck up outside. She read her name, "Muriel Wendover." There was no escaping her, and no escape for herself either. She wanted to be free of it all, she wanted to live. She paid for her meal at the inn and climbed on to another bus that was going still farther; and now, indeed, came farms and cottages, and ploughed fields with wheat and oats just showing, and beanfields, and real orchards, all in blossom, pink and white. And where that bus stopped she took another, following a young man with a box marked "Eggs."

He was a lithe and slender young man with close-cropped curly hair, and he was tanned and brown and fresh as a berry. His head was bare, his shirt open, and he wore gaiters, boots, and breeches that had done service out o' doors; and his face was the face of a faun, serene and happy, such a face as one rarely meets in cities. Muriel thought him the best-looking thing she had seen that day and took the place beside him. "Hello, George!" he said to the conductor, and she liked his voice; and, "My egg-box isn't in your way?" he asked of Muriel, and she liked his manners. She placed her feet on it. He looked at them; he looked at her silk stockings. "Pink-legs," he murmured under his breath, and laughed. It was an infectious laugh, and she laughed too. They laughed together.

"Don't you like them pink?" she asked, recovering.

"Yes, but we never see any of these down here. Going far?"

"You can't go far, can you? Not in England."

"Why?"

"Without tumbling off into the sea—there it is." She had caught a glimpse of it, sparkling in the distance. "I told you so," she added, gaily.

"Then stay here."

"Where?"

"I'm down at Parr's, learning farming; you stay at Miss Jenner's—it's quite close. I'm going there; this is her box," and he indicated the egg-box at her feet. "I fetched it from Amberley for her—had to go over about a calf. What are you doing down here, if it's not rude to ask you?"

"You couldn't be rude, Mr. Faun."

"Mr. Faun?" he asked, puzzled.

"Yes, you see them in pictures, dancing, or chasing wood-nymphs."

"Oh, I know," he laughed; "think I'm like one?"

"The very image."

"Well, you're the prettiest girl I've ever seen; I didn't know there were girls like you." He gazed at her in wonder. "Pink-legs, you're just perfect!"

" Tell me about Miss Jenner's," answered Muriel.

" She's in our lane, the next house. It's called Parr's Lane ; there are only two houses in it. She's got a chicken farm and she takes boarders."

" Would she take me ? "

" Let's try. It'll be two pounds a week ; will that hurt you ? "

" I think—I think," said Muriel, " I can manage it."

" But she won't like those pink stockings —you know what old girls are."

Muriel knew. " I've others," she said.

They sailed on gaily the best part of an hour, till the bus stopped at a corner with a signpost marked " Tortington." The young man rose and, " This is where we get down," he said.

She followed him, and he was holding her suit-case, which she had left below with the conductor, and in the other hand he carried the box marked " Eggs." The bus went off and left them standing in the empty road. Muriel was glad to feel her feet again and the good earth instead of pavements.

They took the lane which ran downhill between the young green of its hedgerows, and next turned into a second lane, more shady, more remote, grass-bordered, and filled with birds and wild flowers. The scent of bluebells came to them from over the hedge, the westering sun now slanted through a wood of beech-trees. " We'll soon be there," said the young man.

" Let's sit down, and then I'll change those stockings," answered Muriel.

" You choose," she said, and she spread stockings before him, black, and nigger-brown, and grey. " I'd advise black."

He placed the egg-box for her and she opened the suit-case.

" You choose," she said, and she spread stockings before him, black, and nigger-brown, and grey.

" I'd advise black."

She kicked her shoes off, and while she changed, " What's that bird ? " she asked.

" A chaffinch."

" And that ? "

" A thrush."

" And that one singing ? "

" A robin."

"You know the country well?" she asked.

"I've never been anywhere else."

She looked at him hard and he looked back.

"Do you know me?" she said.

"You're Pink-legs—you always will be."

"That's right, Mr. Faun."

She had been half afraid that he would answer "Muriel Wendover; I've seen you on the films." But out here she was forgotten, forgotten, and of no account; just a human being like the rest of them, to stand or fall by her own merits, if she had any. She had, apparently; for the boy was stretched on the grass and was looking up into her face, adoring her. "Do you know, I didn't think anybody *could* be as lovely as you are," he was saying; "it's like a dream."

She touched him lightly on the cheek and said, "Thank you."

Miss Jenner's cottage was thatched and timbered, the kind of cottage you see on a Christmas-card and rarely anywhere else. Muriel fell in love with it at sight. She followed the young man through a garden with a tiny stream and coops full of fluffy chicks and ducklings that dodged and fluttered about the lawn. The old hens in charge peered at her, heads to one side and uttering a note of warning. The ducklings fled in panic, the chicks were less afraid; but the oldest and toughest hen of all was Miss Jenner, who, clasping a tin of crushed grain and a pail of mash, was giving them their supper.

"Now, then, my little boys!" she called, striding from coop to coop and talking to them and filling their pans and saucers, "eat it all up, dears!" There was a gurgle in the old voice that made Muriel feel that here was a woman who had missed having stacks of children.

"I've brought your box," cried the young man, "and a visitor who's looking for somewhere to lay her pretty head."

Miss Jenner turned sharply.

"Do you mean this young lady?" she asked. "We're full up."

"You're always full up."

"Now, none of your sauce, Roy!" and turning to Muriel, "Do you want to stay here?"

"Yes, if I may."

"Well, you are rather a nice-looking girl, though your skirts are far too short and you've no stays on"—Miss Jenner herself was corseted up to the armpits—"and what on earth have you done to your back-hair, child? Well, what shall I say?" she added, doubtfully.

"You'd better say 'Yes' and be done with it," answered the young man on Muriel's behalf. "It's two pounds a week, and I've told her."

"All right, all right, if you can put up with us," said Miss Jenner; "but it's chickens before boarders, and you can't say I haven't warned you."

Muriel understood.

"They're here all the time; we only come in the summer," she said, and laughed.

"That's right," answered Miss Jenner; "and what's your name, and who are you?"

"I'm having my holiday, and my name's Muriel—Muriel Wendover."

"Muriel'll do—I can't be bothered with Wendover. Miss Dodd'll look after you; I'm busy. And now you run along, Roy," and addressing her visitor, "Where did you pick him up?"

Muriel laughed again. "On top of the bus," she answered.

"He's always talking to girls on top of that bus; I'll have to tell his father."

"Father knows," said the young man; "he's worse than I am."

"Now you run along and fetch Miss Dodd; she'll look after Muriel."

Miss Dodd was a short, plump, pleasant woman, who seemed well used to old Miss Jenner. She led Muriel indoors and upstairs to a small bedroom, very neat and spotless, that overlooked the meadow with the chicken-runs and houses; and on the way she showed her a bathroom, of which she was evidently very proud. Then Muriel was alone. "I'm in the country—the real country," she thought. There was no mistaking it. She looked out of her window and found young Roy.

"Everything all right?" he called up to her.

"Perfect! Thank you, Mr. Faun."

"Thank *you*, Pink-legs," he answered her, waved a hand, and was gone.

SUPPER came on later, and Muriel was ready for it—she had never been more ready. She had bathed and brushed her hair and straightened herself, and she wondered what she was going to get. A very sunburnt, middle-aged man with a beard had joined them. "Mr. Stapleton—this is Muriel," said old Miss Jenner. "I can't remember her other name, but you must ask her—she's young enough and pretty enough to do without."

Mr. Stapleton looked the visitor up and down with approval. "Muriel ll do," he said; and next he rose from the table with a howl and announced that he'd forgotten his false teeth. He ran out of the room to fetch them; and when he came back, "You ought to put them on and keep them on," said old Miss Jenner; and "First thing in the morning," added Miss Dodd. "I will

when I get used to the damned things," said Mr. Stapleton, and snapped them together to show that all was well.

They supped off cold lamb with mint sauce and a gay salad, full of eggs, beetroot, tomatoes, and radishes, prepared by Miss Dodd. Mr. Stapleton offered his congratulations. Next came rhubarb pie with cream and a junket, followed by Cheddar cheese and biscuits. Mr. Stapleton drank his own bottled beer; the ladies took tea. "Can't abide the beastly stuff," said Mr. Stapleton, as Miss Jenner filled her fourth cup and squeezed the pot for it. "You'll lose your memory if you go on like that," he added, genially; "won't she, Muriel?"

Muriel coloured. With these three she was just a pretty child who had dropped in, and not the great movie star whose name was billed on countless hoardings in both hemispheres. And she loved them for it.

"Your own memory might be better, mightn't it, Mr. Stapleton?" she had asked.

"Because I forget those teeth? I've only had 'em a week. It's the beginning of the end," he went on, dismally; "next it'll be a wig and spectacles and an ear-trumpet and a new smeller! What did Shakespeare say?"

"Sans eyes, sans ears, sans toes, sans everything," misquoted Muriel.

"Good girl!" said Mr. Stapleton.

Miss Dodd now arose and cried, "Spikey!" and a Cairn terrier came out of its box in the corner. It had pointed ears, which accounted for its name, an iron-grey coat, a solemn little face, and dumpy legs. "Spikey-wikey!" cried Miss Dodd, and broke up a biscuit. Spikey-wikey waved its tail.

"Spikey's all right," said Mr. Stapleton, "but those damned cats——"

"You let my cats alone," cried old Miss Jenner.

"I'm not touching 'em. Nasty, sneaking things! That's what cats are. Always begging at you! What's Muriel say?"

Muriel said she liked cats.

"Most women do; it's a fellow-feeling," grunted Mr. Stapleton.

He lit a pipe, and presently they were all out in the garden, the two ladies shutting up the chicks and ducklings for the night; and next they went to the meadow, where an old donkey greeted them, and Dan, the watch-dog, barked outside the chicken-runs.

The two cats, Tibs and Tabs, had been hunting, and came to show what they had caught, and even Mr. Stapleton now had a good word for them as the one produced a large grey rat and the other a rabbit; and, "Come in and get your supper, boys," said old Miss Jenner, who had laid out milk for them and a piece of fish.

The sun was setting in rose and gold and orange, a full moon climbed the purpling sky; from over the hedge came scent of hawthorn and scent of bean-blossom; the whole world breathed a sweetness of new, unfolding things that made one ache with pure delight. Presently Muriel yawned. She had had a long day in the open and was unused to it. "You go to bed, my dear," said old Miss Jenner. Muriel went. "I ought to write to Cherry in London," she thought, before she fell asleep; "but it'll do to-morrow, and, anyway, I don't know where I am." Then her eyes closed.

WHEN she opened them again the sun was shining into the little room and she knew that somebody was watching her. She had felt it in her sleep, and it was this that had made her wake and open wide her eyes and rub them.

"It's you, Mr. Faun; I knew there was somebody."

"I couldn't help coming over, and the window was open, and so I climbed up. I've been watching you asleep and you look lovely. Go to sleep again, Pink-legs."

She sat up in her silk pyjamas.

"Pink all over now!" he said, and laughed.

"You'll be pink if Miss Jenner catches you. Run away, Faun; I'll come down."

She looked at her watch. It wasn't six yet. She jumped out of bed and made for the bathroom.

Roy was waiting for her in the garden.

"Everything all right?" he asked.

"Couldn't be better. Who's this Mr. Stapleton?"

"He paints pictures; he'll paint you if he gets a chance."

"What's he do with them?"

"I don't know. He's a good old bird, really." Thus those two discussed a man who, in his own sphere, was as great an artist as Muriel's self.

"I've got a motor-bike," Roy pursued; "I'll fetch you for a spin after breakfast. I've got to turn the cows out into the field and give them a feed first; then I'm off for the day."

"I'll be ready."

Noon found them in a village many miles distant. They had bumped along gaily over main roads and byways, Muriel seated pillion-fashion behind and Roy driving; slowing at the corners, speeding on the level, and rolling up the hills, on which they paused for a view. They ate the parcel of sandwiches Miss Jenner had given them, they sucked the oranges that Roy had added, they devoured the bananas and chocolate Muriel had found in the village shop. They were resting now on a bench outside the

Fountain Inn, the church in front of them, the common and its pond. They left the motor-bike and lit cigarettes and wandered.

"This is the country—the real country," said Muriel; "Faun, it's just like you."

Her hand slid through his arm. They had come to bluebells, shimmering like blue water under the green of trees; and the shadows fell here and the woods were silent save for a whisper that lured them farther and farther away from roads and men; and each held back from breaking that spell with kisses, as though they knew that with love goes sorrow. They came out into broad day again with their secret, the words unspoken, yet music thrilling both their hearts.

"Songs without words," thought Muriel, then said it aloud.

"The birds sing them; and they are the best," he answered.

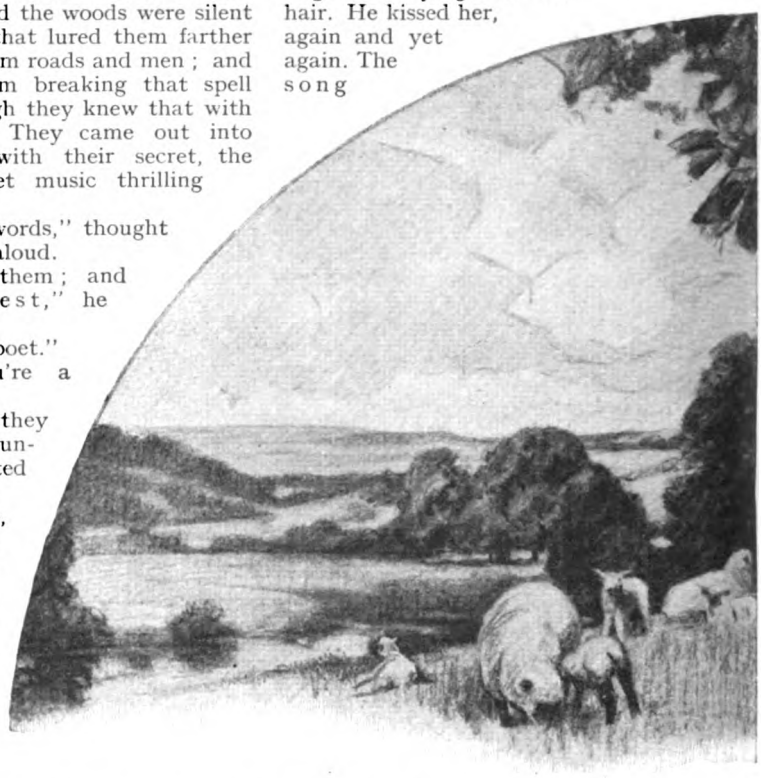
"Faun, you're a poet."

"Pink-legs, you're a darling."

Hand in hand they went back to the Fountain Inn and started the motor-bike.

On that day, too, Muriel went to bed without sending a line to Cherry in London. "I'm too happy," she thought; "business would only spoil it. He can wait."

They sat and listened and had no words till a pause came. Then, "I do love you," said Roy; and their lips met, and hands and hearts as they clung together. He heard hers beating when, with head close against her shoulder, he held her to him. "Again—again—again," she whispered, her fingers straying in his hair. He kissed her, again and yet again. The song



IT was on the next day, long after everybody in the cottage had gone to bed, that Muriel heard the nightingales. She had said that she wanted to hear one, and Roy had promised to take her. "I'll come at eleven," he had said; "you get out by the window. We don't want any of the others, do we?"

Over the fields they went, then uphill to the coppice. A moonlit world unfolded as they climbed. At last they threw themselves down on the grass and looked out over it.

Roy had spread the raincoat he had brought so that they might sit dry. The little coppice was behind them, and valley and stream and farmland and woodland deep below, and a lake glistening, and a far-off glimpse of the sea. A star shot out of the heavens and fell into space; and after that, wonderfully, breaking the silence, they heard the liquid trills and passion of the nightingales. Such a note in it; as though these had waited all day long and half the night for the magic hour!

returned. They stopped and listened. "I wish I were a bird!" said Muriel.

At last they went downhill, through the scented night, lingering for kisses, loitering like children. He helped her to climb back, then waited. He waited till he saw her light burn, till it went out. She threw him one last kiss from the window; and they had heard the nightingales, and it was time to go to bed. . . . "Poor old Cherry!" she thought; "he'll be getting anxious." She certainly must write to-morrow.

Cherry *had* grown anxious. On the fourth day he was feverish, and, being still without so much as a postcard, he had driven off to Scotland Yard. He would get the police on to this matter, and if they didn't look quick, he would get the newspapers. Muriel had often gone away by herself before, but she had always sent him a line and told him. He had begun to see things, including tragedies; real ones this time; more real than any he had ever directed

or produced. Cherry was worried to death. And thus it happened that on the sixth day, just as Muriel and Roy had caught two of the ducklings and were giving them a swim in old Miss Jenner's bath, using the cork bath-mat as an island and diving-board —thus it happened that on the sixth day a policeman called at the cottage, took out a portrait and a printed description, and asked for Miss Muriel Wendover.

Her hand slid through his arm. "This is the country, the real country," said Muriel.

"What have you done?" cried old Miss Jenner, popping into the bath-room and purple with alarm. "You'll drown those ducks if you're not careful. There's a policeman come and called for you; he's at the door."

Muriel went downstairs and confessed.

"Yes, it's me," she said.

"Your friends are growing anxious," began the constable.

"That's old Cherry."

"Shall we send a wire or will you?"

"You send it; I don't know where I am, and you do."

"All right, miss; and, asking your pardon, are you the lady that acts on the films?"

"I am; but don't tell anybody—please don't tell anybody."

The policeman nodded.

"Just send that wire, if you have to," added Muriel.

"All right, miss; and—do you mind signing this picture? I'd like to keep it."

The constable was a kindly fellow. He had produced a fountain-pen.

Muriel wrote her name across the hastily-done portrait.

"Thank you, miss; I'll be off now. Sorry to upset you."

He mounted his bicycle and rode away.

"*What have you done?*" repeated old Miss Jenner.

"Robbed a bank, vamped an orphan, slow-poisoned a fond and trusting husband, hidden a manslayer" —she had, indeed, done all these things in her time; "you dear old dragon," she ended, "I've been so happy here, I haven't had time to write to anybody, and so they've got alarmed."

"Well, just you sit down and write at once."

"They'll come after me; never you fear! I'm going to take Spikey for a walk; and there's Roy, isn't there, and Mr. Stapleton? I promised to let him draw me or paint me, or whatever he does."

"Run along, then"; and old Miss Jenner went back to her chickens.

CHERRY drove up in his car on the following morning.

"I've found you," he said; "why didn't you write?"

"Because I'm not coming back—never—never!"

Cherry was a diplomatist as well as a movie man. Had he not been, he could never have held Muriel all these years, nor even for as many months.

He chewed his cigar. "Yes, I allow it's fine here," he answered, "real country—

what you were after. Smells good, looks good; you're looking good, Muriel."

She showed him the ducklings and the chicks, and Ned the donkey; she introduced him to Spikey, and Dan the watch-dog, and the two cats; and to old Miss Jenner and Miss Dodd, and to Mr. Stapleton; and when he had taken it all in, "What do you say to a drive, Muriel?" asked Cherry.

"I don't mind doing that. We'll get Roy," she said; "he's over at some market."

"I don't want anybody but you, Muriel."

They started off, and for a long while drove along in silence. Then Cherry asked, "You went away to find a story; have you found one?"

"The finest in the world."

"That's great," said Cherry.

"No, it isn't great. I'm going to quit movie acting; I'm done. I'll settle down here; I'll buy a farm."

"And the young man?" asked Cherry; "that's Roy, isn't it?"

"He'll farm it."

"Does he know?"

"We haven't come to that yet."

Cherry said no more till they stopped at a town that had a cinema theatre with Muriel's name stuck up in large letters and her picture.

"That's us," said Cherry.

At a second town, with more bills and more pictures, they took their lunch, and Cherry went privately to the post-office and sent a wire to old Miss Jenner, and afterwards spread a map that told them exactly where they stood.

"That's great stuff," he was lisping, "those chicks and ducklings. People like young animals; kinder makes 'em feel good. And those two dogs and that guy with a beard like a goat and no teeth——"

"He's got teeth, but he forgets them."

"And those two old hens, Miss Jenner and Miss Wotsername—I guess you were the spring chicken in that bunch!"

Muriel smiled, for the first time since Cherry had come for her.

"Great stuff all of it—people who live in cities like being taken out into the country. And now you're going in for farming?"

They were in the town again and strolling past the hoardings that spread Muriel's name and fame to the four corners of the world.

"Cut it out," Cherry ran on. He was serious. "You'll come back with me and do a new picture; that's your work, not farming!"

"I'm in love," she answered.

"So'm I; but I don't let it make any difference. I'm in love with my work, Muriel, same as you."

"I'm through with work; I want to be happy."

"You wouldn't be happy. You might for a year; and listen, Muriel, I'm talking horse sense: it won't be spring always, there's autumn and winter. It'll be home and a husband and children, and the same day every day—just like other women."

"You've hit it," said Muriel.

"*But you're not like other women.* There's only one Muriel Wendover. You're a genius. You can't get away from that."

"I'm going to get away from that."

"Can't be done. Let's drive?"

They started off; and then, as the houses grew together again, "Where are you taking me to?" asked Muriel.

"Back to London."

"I'm not coming."

"You're there, Muriel. I've sent that old dame a telegram; she'll pack and forward your things when we've mailed the money you owe her."

There was another long silence; and next, as they threaded the outskirts of the vast and multitudinous city where Muriel was so renowned, that was but one of the hundred cities which had built up around her a name and reputation, given scope to her art, opportunity to her genius, "I believe you're right, Cherry," she said; "one can't have it both ways. It's love or glory, and if you're marked down for the one, you haven't much choice—you haven't *any* choice."

"That's sense, Muriel."

SHE sat down that evening and wrote her letter.

"Faun darling," she said, "I would never have made you happy. Not for long. But we've had our dream, and I'll never forget it. Nor will you. Don't let's spoil it. There's a pair of silk stockings I left behind. Ask Miss Jenner for them and keep them. One last kiss, my own dear Faun."

She signed this "Pink-legs" and folded it; and then she had turned to Cherry.

"But it'll all come right in the picture, won't it? When we do it that way, it'll all be right?" she asked him.

The tears were rolling down her cheeks, and poor old Cherry felt a brute.

"It'll all come right in the picture," he answered. "That's where we have life beat."

WILLIAM—KNOW THE WORLD

By

LAURENCE CLARKE

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

I.

THIRTY-SIX times had Mr. Jacob Doherty, of Montreal, crossed the Atlantic. He was now making his thirty-seventh trip. This journey, however, was not as the others. For Mr. Doherty, a widower of eight years' experience, was travelling in company of his only son, William. He was about to show William something of the larger world. After a farewell to McGill University the boy had spent six months in his father's office. And, in order to impress upon him the state that would one day be his, his seat had been near a window overlooking the St. Lawrence, where the elder Doherty's great lumber rafts could be seen floating towards Quebec and the sea.

Old Doherty was a large man who, at a very early age, had discovered how many beans make five. He possessed a grey eye, grey hair, and tufted eyebrows. His voice was large and in keeping with his person. Having amassed a fortune by judicious measures of boldness and caution, he was in the occasional habit of reminding his son, and the world at large, of the unquestioned value of both qualities.

Almost immediately after boarding the great liner, his bold side being uppermost, Doherty senior indulged in a moment of princely munificence. He took out his pocket-book and presented his son with one thousand pounds in English notes.

"William boy," he said—his eyes were upon New York's receding skyscrapers—"that thousand's yours to do as you like with. But you must watch out. This world, I tell you, is plum full of pitfalls for young men like you. There are wolves in sheep's clothing, both male and female. And even aboard this liner, people, mark you, may not be what they seem!"

He laid a paternal hand on the boy's uncovered head, and smiled the high smile of one to whom the world has no secrets.

The boy flushed slightly and raised a protective hand to his pocket-book. For never before had he possessed more than two hundred dollars at one time. And the thousand pounds reposing next his heart seemed to him like a warm, live thing.

When the great liner reached the blue ocean, where the big rollers abide, and night fell and the stars came out, Mr. Doherty senior, who had been pacing the deck alone, threw his cigar-end overboard and descended the spacious companion-way. He was in search of his son, who had been missing since an hour or so after dinner.

He found William in the card-room, attractively boyish and handsome in his new dinner-jacket and white shirt. The young man was standing amid a little group of lookers-on at a game of poker. The elder Doherty advanced and stood protectively at his son's side. He too looked down at the game.

Two of the players were stout and prosperous business men. A third was a young man of empty aspect, obviously nothing more than the son of an opulent father. A fourth at the table was a reserved-looking man who had gone prematurely grey. This man's complexion was of a uniform ivory tint. His eyes moved languidly from player to player, his hands were beautifully white, and he wore his evening clothes with distinction. When he spoke, his voice was soft, mild, and confidence-inspiring. But for all that Doherty senior knew him for a card-sharp.

Doherty had, indeed, crossed the ocean four times on the same boat as this man, and had often watched him at work. He studied him now with a new and closer attention.

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The manner in which the professional gamester conveyed that he was almost a novice at the game filled sagacious Doherty senior with genuine admiration. He admired efficiency wherever he found it. For some minutes he lingered upon the scene. And presently, as he looked from the card-sharp's expressionless, subtle countenance towards the ingenuous face of his own son, a dark and guileful idea thrust its way into his mind.

He was wholly and entirely devoted to the youthful William. In Montreal the boy and he had been inseparable. Between the big, successful man and the untried boy, a jolly comradeship existed. People laughed and called them the two Obadiahs, and the elder Doherty was delighted to be so called. But he wanted William to be wise as he was wise, and shrewd as he was shrewd. And this idea —it was an idea so neat, and so original, that as Doherty senior meditated upon it he was obliged to laugh behind his hand.

That night, when Levine rose from the card-table, Doherty tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"Mr. Levine," he said, "I'd like to have a private word with you in my state-room."

"Very good, Mr. Doherty. I'll be along inside a minute," Levine answered imperturbably.

Later, when this skilful and devious personage presented himself in Doherty's state-room, he entered softly as though amid spring-guns and man-traps. He took his seat in a long basket-chair at Doherty's invitation, and crossed his legs. To his surprise Montreal's richest lumber merchant opened matters by pushing an open cigar-box towards him.

"Try one of mine," he said. He waited until Levine had helped himself, then sat down within a yard of him. The eyes of the two men met in the seclusion and quiet of the cabin. The father of William spoke briefly.

"I've got a proposition to make to you, Levine," he said.

The gambler unleashed a cautious, almost an imperceptible smile.

"I can guess what your proposition is, Mr. Doherty," he responded. "You don't want me to play cards with your son."

Doherty regarded the subtle face of the other for a moment.

"That's just where you are wrong," he said. "I *want* you to play cards with him. I want you to win from him one thousand pounds in English money!"

Levine's eyes narrowed for a moment, then his habitual bland suavity closed down over his features like a mask.

"I gave him," continued Mr. Doherty, "that amount in English notes when he came aboard. It's the largest sum of money the boy has ever handled. And I think it will do him good to lose it!"

Levine, whose knowledge of the world was wide, if not deep, had never in his experience met a rich man in this mood. It was natural that he should be incredulous.

"Mr. Doherty," he said, "I'm afraid I'll have to 'call' you."

"Call nothing," retorted the other. "I mean what I say. I surely want you to win that thousand pounds from my boy."

Levine looked thoughtfully at his well-kept finger-nails. Then he lifted his inscrutable brown eyes.

"But perhaps your boy won't play with me," he said.

Mr. Doherty answered bluntly.

"You had your eye on him to-night. By to-morrow he'll be in the game."

"Perhaps he won't lose. Poker's an uncertain game," said Levine in his soft, confidence-inspiring voice.

"Don't be funny," exclaimed Mr. Doherty, waving a big hand. "*You* know who'll lose all right!"

Levine rose, still doubtful.

"There'll be no trouble coming to me out of this, Mr. Doherty?" he asked.

"None, I give my word," affirmed the parent of William. "I can afford to educate my boy any way I like. And it seems to me if young William gets well singed this first trip abroad, it'll be a valuable social lesson to him. In the long run, Levine, I guess I stand to win as much as you do."

"Yours is a great educational notion, Mr. Doherty," smiled Levine, after a moment's satisfied consideration. "I'll think about it!"

II.

WHEN Levine stepped out of Doherty's state-room his air was care-free and even jaunty. Nevertheless, he was thinking hard. He was saying to himself that the elder Doherty, a queer fish, was freakishly about to throw away a thousand pounds. He supposed it was all right. Anyway, if the lumber merchant had money to burn, let him burn it. During the quarter of a century wherein he, Levine, had travelled the world at other people's expense, he had obtained quite a number of sums equal to that. But never had matters been made so easy for him. Inwardly, behind his superlative impassivity, Mr. Levine laughed. And then a thought came to him. He thought of Lulu Gledhill.

With a brief glance over his shoulder he turned and proceeded aft down a companion-way to the less expensive state-rooms. He knocked upon a door. A rich, low voice summoned him to enter. And stepping over

the high door-sill, he came into the presence of a woman of thirty-eight or forty. The woman, seated in a low basket-chair, was wrapped in a flaring, sunset-coloured peignoir. In one hand she held a cigarette, in the other a novel she had been reading.

"Hello, Bill Levine! How do?" she exclaimed, glancing at her visitor. "Help yourself. There's drink in the rack there."

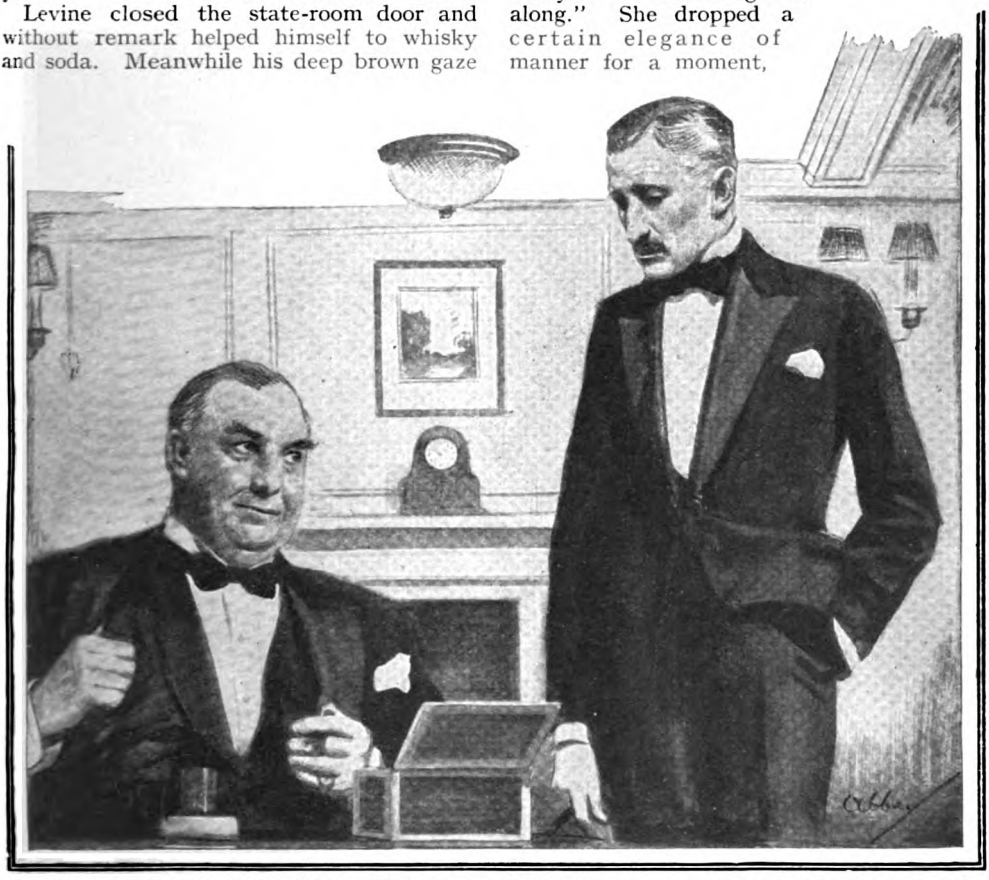
Levine closed the state-room door and without remark helped himself to whisky and soda. Meanwhile his deep brown gaze rested upon her thoughtfully. She was sombre-haired, softly rounded, and with large melting eyes. In artificial light, with her hair well-coiffured and wearing evening toilette as she knew how to wear it, she could have passed for thirty-five. An arresting woman, still possessed of the charm which had been the curse of her easy, pleasure-seeking nature. Levine and she were old acquaintances, that and nothing more. It was quite by chance that each had chosen this particular liner for what might be termed their autumn campaign.

"I was just thinking of bed," said the woman.

"Lulu, I want to have a particular word with you. Anything doing yet?"

The woman—with a hairpin—marked her place in her novel and laid it aside. Her eyes scanned a printed passenger list lying on a little table beside her.

"I've been looking them over," she said; "they don't amount to a row of beans. Too many wives and daughters along." She dropped a certain elegance of manner for a moment, and spoke plaintively in the accent of the Middle West. "The world seems full of wives, Bill!"



Levine rose, still doubtful. "There'll be no trouble coming to me out of this, Mr. Doherty?" he asked.

Levine fingered his chin thoughtfully.

"Ever heard of old Doherty, Montreal? He's got it to burn."

The woman picked up the list.

"And a grown-up son to look after him."

Levine laughed.

"I'll promise the kid won't be in your way. I want to spiel something to you. Listen."

And briefly he narrated the import of his recent interview with the elder Doherty. The woman's large, innocent-seeming eyes

grew round and intent; a faint smile began to stir the corners of her carmine lips.

"I want," Levine said at last, "somebody to keep the old man busy while I work the son. Understand me? That's where you come in, Lulu. Doherty won't fall for any sort of game I can play, but he might for yours. He thinks he's cute——"

"I like 'em cute," said the woman, showing her teeth; "tell me some more."

Levine ruminated.

"Lulu! I guess he'd fall for the quiet, womanly kind of woman, sorrowing widow, and that sort of punk. Get me?"

She nodded. Their eyes met, exchanged humorous comment.

"How's George?" asked Levine.

"Oh, George!" exclaimed the woman in disgust. "Whenever they let him, he writes me long whining letters."

"Rough luck they tripped him up that time."

"George always wanted to try the bank game. And he tried it," Lulu returned carelessly. "Well, he got three years to think about it, and left me on my uppers."

Levine became cynical.

"You've done pretty well, Lulu, since he was put away."

"Don't *talk* about him!"

It was a fact, however, that she had done well in her husband's absence. But at the moment funds were low, and the subject of George was one that was of no interest to her. She returned to the elder Doherty.

"Tell me about this old Obadiah," she said.

Levine told her all he knew, then he rose and took his departure.

"Good hunting," he said, as he went softly out into the corridor.

Within twenty-four hours Lulu Gledhill was at work. She began by suborning a steward to insert her deck chair between the chair of Mr. Doherty senior and the chair of an oil merchant from Philadelphia. Thus, when William's father, engaged with his after-dinner cigar and enveloped in a long overcoat, reclined himself in his usual place on the upper deck, he observed that a stranger was beside him.

The stranger was a lady.

Mr. Doherty's eyesight was good, but its efficiency was not equal to the cosmetic attainments of Mrs. Lulu Gledhill. The lady's red lips, faintly roseate cheeks, and delicately shadowed eyes totally deceived him. Her age he put down at thirty-five—a comfortable age—not young enough to be silly, and not old enough to be sour. He felt curious about her. He wondered who she was, and perceived, knowingly, that she wore a wedding-ring.

They fell into conversation with the ease so natural upon a liner. She was a widow, it seemed. Somehow he had guessed that. Since her husband's death she had travelled and travelled. Her expression, as she revealed her sad little story, was too womanly for words. It was a wistful and fawn-like expression. And as he looked into her large, gentle, melting eyes a foolish fancy came to Mr. Doherty. It seemed to him that he was gazing into the eyes of an exquisite doe somewhere in a deep and lovely forest.

That was the beginning.

Down below in the card-room, his mouth set in a hard line, the youthful William was playing poker with Levine.

That was also the beginning.

III.

FORTY-EIGHT hours after their first meeting, Mr. Doherty and the softly-rounded, so innocent-eyed, roseate widow were pacing the deck together as old friends. It seemed to Doherty senior that he had known this beautiful and fascinating woman for years. Her name, Lulu, began, as it were, to dance impishly and recurrently across his consciousness. On the third day, when he was alone in his stateroom, he experimentally uttered the word aloud:—

"Lulu!"

The beauty of the sound startled him. The name fitted her like a glove. Lulu Gledhill. Somehow he did not care for the name "Gledhill."

He managed, from the immense resources of the liner, to secure Lulu on the fourth evening a bouquet of fresh flowers. He handed them to her upon the deck beneath mingled electricity and starlight, with a moon about to burgeon forth from the dark mystery of the sea. She took the flowers. She looked up into his eyes. Her fingers gripped his in thankfulness.

That night Jacob Doherty drew the flexible electric lamp close to his stateroom mirror and eyed himself long and critically in the glass. Fifty-five. But in that light he looked no more than forty-five. Lulu had said she could scarcely believe he was the father of a boy of twenty-one. A song came into his mind which had found no entrance there for three decades. It had been a great song in his own day at McGill University. He hummed it now. A ditty of sublime foolishness and sentimentality—about a bicycle built for two. He went to bed and lay there wide awake, thinking.

Next morning, after breakfast, he was still thinking, for he cut from a magazine an absolute panacea for grey or thinning hair. Moreover, he took a long time to put on

He managed, from the immense resources of the liner, to secure Lulu a bouquet of fresh flowers. She took them and looked up into his eyes.

his hat at an angle which bespoke rejuvenation, even if not youth. On deck he passed Levine, who had been playing cards daily with William, and it seemed to him that Levine looked at him with disfavour. The younger Doherty was also abroad, apparently looking for his father. Parent and son met. They linked arms and strode the deck together. The elder man broke the silence with an effect of youthful boisterousness.

"Obadiah boy," he said—in jolly intimate moments of this sort he called his offspring Obadiah—"Obadiah, how would you take it if I was to think of marrying a second time?"

The boy started and stopped in his walk.

"What?" he asked.

His father repeated his question.

"I wouldn't object, father," William said, as though the words were being dragged out of him, "if you chose the right woman."

Doherty senior smiled again the high smile of one for whom the world has no secrets.

"I'm some chooser," he said.

And at that delicate moment Mrs. Gledhill appeared and led him away. William watched his docile departure. There was a faint roll, and the boy noticed that at the first depression of the deck his father took Mrs. Gledhill's arm. He took her arm and forgot to release it. Inwardly young William groaned, then he descended to his state-room. Mrs. Gledhill was not the beauteous mystery to him that she was to his father. He sat gloomily on the edge of his bunk, his head in his hands, pondering the situation. The affair had grown with the rapidity of a fired hay-rick. And there was a sort of false jauntiness in his father's manner that made him terribly uneasy. What if his father were thinking of marrying Mrs. Gledhill? And if Mrs. Gledhill——

An idea came to him.

He rose and rang the bell. A steward came.

"I want to ask you a somewhat queer question," said the young man. He was a very young man, you will understand, with only a limited knowledge of life. "Do you know anything about a Mrs. Gledhill, who sits at the second officer's table?"

The steward shook his head.

"I've got a reason for asking," said William. He looked hard at the steward, then took out his pocket-book. "I *particularly* want to know everything there is to know about her."

The steward observed the pocket-book, and became helpful.

"The purser might know, sir. I'll ask him." He went away and returned in ten minutes.

"The purser says the lady booked her passage at a sub-office in Dayton, Ohio. Her passport describes her as a United States citizen and a widow; that's all he knows. But there is a family in the second class who come from Dayton, Ohio. He thinks they're likely to know something about her."

"I'm much obliged, steward."

Five minutes later young Doherty descended the companion-way and made his way aft to the second-class quarters of the ship.

IV.

THE last day of the voyage arrived and Mrs. Gledhill knew she was safe. The capture of the elder Doherty had been almost too easy. True, he was in the sentimental fifties, and he had been eight years a widower, but still——

A great moon rose out of the sea on this ultimate evening. And Doherty *père*, in evening clothes, leaning over the rail, his hat atilt, moved his large, capable hand and laid it upon hers.

"Lulu," he said softly. That and nothing more. He withdrew his hand and they both looked out upon the romantic and dreaming waters. Mr. Doherty had uttered that name so many times, had practised it (even aloud) with such persistency in his state-room, that its sound in the romantic night was delicious to him. How beautiful she was by moonlight! He thought: "She looks no more than a girl!" Then he thought again: "I'll have to tell William in the morning!" William, deep in his nightly poker game, he believed had noticed nothing. He had hardly seen his son, in fact, during the past few evenings. Lulu had not withdrawn her hand. She had not resented his use of her name.

Late that night, from the adjoining state-room, young Doherty heard his father singing softly a doleful Alabama-coonish song. He heard, and this time he groaned aloud.

V.

DOHERTY SENIOR had retired early to rest because Mrs. Gledhill had also retired early to rest. She was one of those women who are clever enough to avoid an emotional anti-climax. She had retired from the tender scene upon deck at the perfect moment. She had gone to her state-room in a mood of complete triumph. Henceforth, and without shadow of doubt, the elder Doherty was to be as wax in her hands.

She lit a cigarette, and being alone relaxed her features. It was strange. It was as though, being alone, she put off the almost girlish face which had fascinated the foolish parent of William, and had reverted

to the woman of forty, to her real self. Charm seemed to flow out of her features. Softness went from her eyes and calculation took its place. Truly old Doherty had been too easy. He had not asked a single awkward question. And no shadow of doubt had ever crossed his alleged shrewd features.

Lulu Gledhill stood in the middle of her state-room, blew a great cloud of tobacco smoke into the air, and laughed about it all. And even as she laughed an abrupt knock fell upon her door. In a flash, youth came back to her features. She pulled herself together. She became again beautiful to look upon. Gracefully but noiselessly she reposed herself in a reclining chair. The moment had come. Old Doherty was at her door! He could not wait. Her heart genuinely beat. The moment was big with portent.

"Come in," she murmured, softly.

The door opened instantly and the man who entered was Doherty indeed, but the younger Doherty.

The boy saw her look of surprise, and observed her instant recovery. In the last hour he had learnt Lulu Gledhill's complete story. From A to Z the unsavoury tale of her blackmailing husband and herself had been made plain to him. He knew that her husband was in prison, that she had escaped by sheer caprice of fortune. He knew her true age. In her presence he felt callow and uneasy, but he was strong in resolution.

"Mrs. Gledhill," he plunged, "I want to speak to you about my father."

She smiled.

"Do sit down," she invited, cordially.

Awkwardly he seated himself.

"What about your father?" she asked, with a sweet pursing of rich red lips.

The boy leaned towards her intently.

"Are you thinking of marrying him?"

There ensued a pause, a quiet during which the gentle murmur of far-off turbines held the scene. Mrs. Gledhill sat motionless. A fool's question indeed! Of course she was thinking of marrying his father. A little manipulation would keep the lumber merchant at her side until such time as her real husband could be disposed of. Certainly, without any doubt whatever, she intended to marry Doherty senior. The matter, however, was one which she did not intend to discuss with Doherty's son. She began to feel for an easy way of getting rid of her inconvenient visitor. And then the boy dropped his bomb-shell in the refined quiet of the saloon.

"I know all about you," he said.

Mrs. Gledhill slid her eyes from his, her face became set.

"Listen," said the boy. And in hurried sentences, as though the tale were long and time short, he ran through what he had heard of her history. He mentioned Dayton, Ohio, the prison, the last awkward affair of the bank. He reminded her she was still tightly wedded to the absent Gledhill. But because she was a woman, and he was what he was, he spoke courteously, with as much regard for her feelings as possible.

Mrs. Gledhill was not mollified by his callow chivalry. Fury stormed within her. So he knew all. If, at that moment, she had had the power, she would have rent the good-looking young man into pieces. It would have given her infinite pleasure to disfigure his handsome face with her finger-nails. But she hid the passion that consumed her and turned a calm face towards him.

"I don't want you to give up my father for nothing," said the young man, quietly. "I'm willing to make some sort of—of compensation."

He saw her jerk her head in a new and keen eagerness. He could read cupidity in the deep eyes, and revulsion came to him.

"I'll give you a hundred English pounds."

She laughed in scorn, and he knew by the ring of that laugh that the business would be expensive. Nevertheless, he was prepared to face expense to keep the matter from his father. For if he went to the elder Doherty and told him all he knew about Mrs. Gledhill, the humiliation for the elder man would be terrible. Again, the woman's spell was so potent that she might still get round the old man. He had read of things like that, and the thought sent a cold shiver down his back. Full of wise saws and modern instances, his father had organized this trip to Europe to make his son aware of the snares and pitfalls of a wicked world. It would be a frightful thing if, the moment they stepped across the threshold of the world together, his father should himself trip over the doormat! No, he could not let his father suffer like that.

"I'll pay you a thousand English pounds, Mrs. Gledhill," he said, breaking a long silence.

She looked at him searchingly for a moment. There was a quality of inflexibility, of finality in his offer which made her uneasy. She wondered why he offered so much, and felt that, ingenuous as he was, she could not fathom him. Nevertheless, he had made her uneasy. Well, if he really had the money, if he really had a thousand . . . . With a steady hand she lit a cigarette.

"When do I get the money?" she asked, her eyes like needle points upon him.

"When you give me your promise not to

communicate with my father again. And when you promise to go ashore at eight to-morrow, the minute the ship docks."

"But I must say good-bye to him."

"It's not necessary," firmly returned the boy.

He rose and took out his pocket-book. Mrs. Gledhill's gaze fell upon the black and white splendour of a little pile of one-hundred-pound notes.

Ten minutes later William was out in the gangway, anxiety off his mind, and his pocket-book empty. The thousand pounds which the gambler Levine had failed to get in a week's effort were gone. His small change had vanished to Levine, but all the gambler's blandishments had failed to make him touch that thousand, the thousand which had been so recently a warm, live thing in the pocket next his heart.

"Do sit down," she invited, cordially. Awkwardly he marrying

NEXT morning sirens awoke the elder Doherty from blissful slumber. The big liner was in Liverpool dock, the five days' undulation of the vessel had ceased, and overhead the fearful clatter of arrival assailed his ears. He rang for hot water and dressed quickly, then he seated himself and wrote a brief note to Lulu, signing himself "Big Boy."

He smiled as he wrote the comradely nickname she had applied to him in the last few days. He rang the bell, gave the note to the steward, and told him to wait for an answer. And soon the steward returned, still carrying the note. Mrs. Gledhill had gone ashore at eight that morning. She had an urgent train to catch at Lime Street, the man told him.

"Thank you," said the elder Doherty. He was stunned. He took his pitiful note, laid it aside, and went to the lower deck to interrogate Lulu's stewardess. The stewardess corroborated the steward. Doherty turned away and his son touched his arm.

"Father," the boy rallied him, "what about breakfast? You said yesterday you wouldn't go ashore until you'd eaten an ox."

"I said that yesterday, my boy; yesterday I——" He broke off, valiantly hiding his wound, and permitted the boy to lead him down the broad, immense companion-way into the carpeted dining saloon.

Here Mr. Doherty's grey gaze went to the seat usually occupied by Lulu, but he gave no other sign. A mask indeed hid his feelings all that day, until late afternoon.

And then in London, in the gracious envelopment of the Savoy *foyer*, he suddenly laughed somewhat queerly.

Of course he had been a fool; the pretty widow had been playing with him, laughing at him, deriding his honourable grey hairs. Well, he was in London now; he would shake it off. He was showing his boy the world. He would never let his boy know

seated himself. "What about your father?" she asked. "Are you thinking of him?" said the boy.

that he had been a fool and fallen in love. And then suddenly something occurred to him. He remembered his little arrangement by which Levine should win a thousand pounds in the cause of the boy's education.

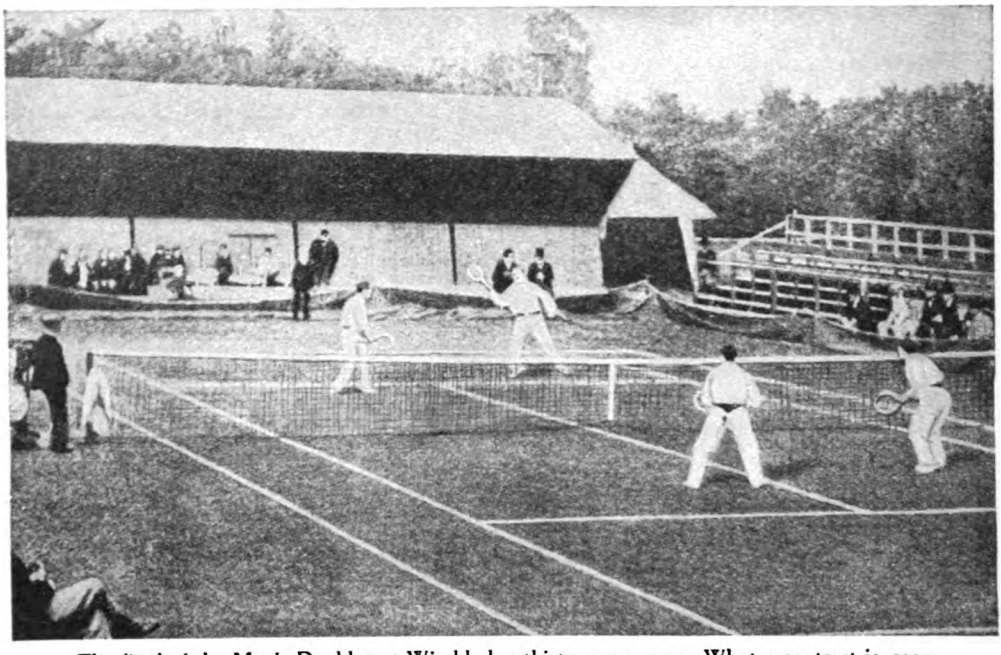
He looked at the youthful William, slim, sunburned, eager.

"William boy," he cunningly said, "there is a little thing I want you to do for me." Once more was he the shrewd lumber king, who at a very early age knew how many beans make five. "William"—he laid a hand on the boy's shoulder—"I'm in quick need of a thousand pounds in English money. I'll be glad if you'll loan me the thousand I gave you."

He waited and saw the flush darken the youthful William's cheek.

"I haven't got it, father—I——"

There ensued a pause. But the elder Doherty did not break the pause with laughter. Or remind William of wolves in sheep's clothing, male and female. Nor did he clap him on the shoulder and say: "I told you so." No; he decided to be magnanimous and say nothing at all.



The final of the Men's Doubles at Wimbledon thirty years ago. What a contrast is seen between this picture, with its primitive stands and meagre attendance, and that on the opposite page showing a game on the Centre Court at the present time!

By permission of "Lawn Tennis."

THE JUBILEE OF WIMBLEDON

Some Incidents of Fifty Years of the Lawn Tennis Championships.

BY

F. R. BURROW

(Referee of the Championships, 1919-1926).

FIFTY years ago the first Men's Singles Lawn Tennis Championship was played for at Wimbledon—the "old" Wimbledon ground of the All England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club, as it was then called. There cannot be many survivors of the two hundred spectators who assembled to see Spencer Gore beat W. Marshall in the final round of that first Championship, in a match first of all postponed over the two days of the Eton and Harrow cricket match, and then put off for another four days owing to bad weather, and finally played "between the showers."

What would those earliest patrons of the game, seated on a few casual benches, and watching two men serving underhand, never volleying, engaging in interminable rallies of soft shots of high trajectory (for the net was then five feet high at the posts and three feet six inches in the middle) on a court without any "surround" or even stop-netting—what would they have thought of a "final" at the "new" Wimbledon, played not by English players at all, but, probably, by a couple of French-

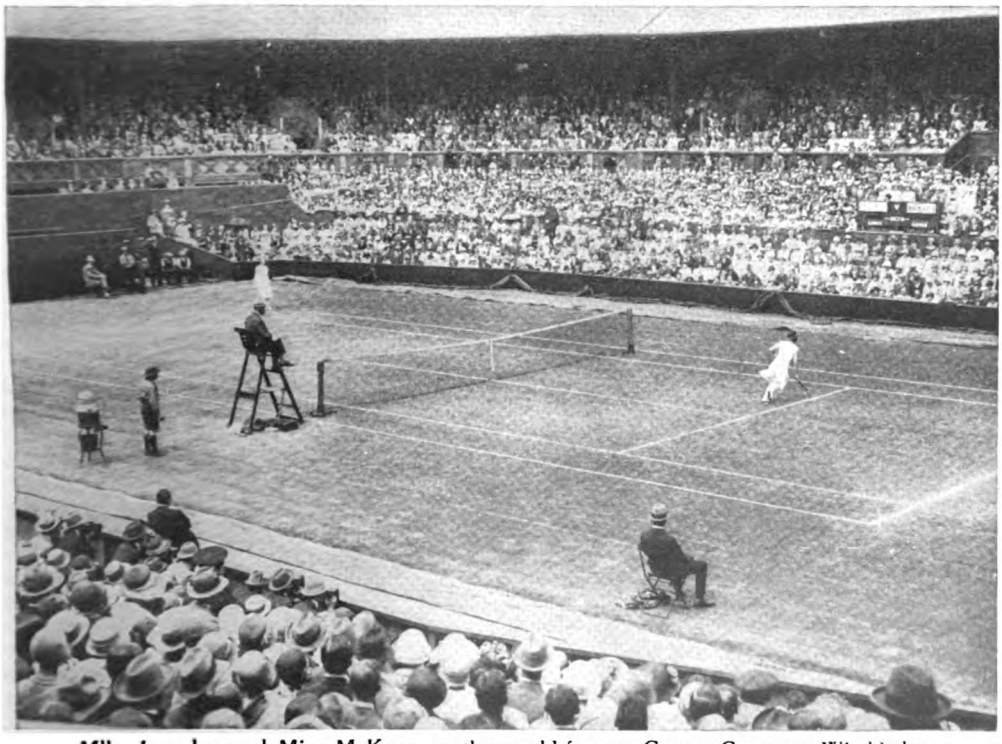
men or Americans, at lightning speed, in an arena surrounded by towering tiers of covered stands, filled with fourteen or fifteen thousand excited spectators ?

A Championship match of to-day is a thing they could never have even imagined ; and indeed the changes are sufficiently astounding to those who, like myself, have only known their Wimbledon for forty years instead of the full fifty. Even on the first occasion I ever went to see the play at Wimbledon, in 1886, the " stands " (which for the first time that year went all round the court) were merely two or three rows of benches, and the umpire sat on a chair precariously balanced on a rather decrepit table ! And there were, I think, not above a hundred people to look on at the first match I saw played on the world-famous " Centre Court "—a long and rather dull encounter between Ernest Renshaw and the ambidextrous Herbert Chipp, only enlivened by Chipp's emphatically expressed disgust at the condition of the court, which was of a distinctly woolly description, with daisies and even an occasional head of clover diversifying its natural green. (*See drawings on the next page.*)

But perfect as the courts at the old ground afterwards became, a current of criticism always trickled round them, emanating for the most part, naturally, from those who had lost their matches and wanted some excuse. And they did not attain perfection all at once. Players and spectators of to-day may be amused to know, for example, that in 1887 " on many of the courts the grass was so unevenly cut as to give great dissatisfaction. E. W. Lewis, in one match, asked if it would not be possible to have the court re-cut. In many courts the new court-lines so plainly and closely intersected and paralleled the old ones as to cause great annoyance to players, to say nothing of the unfortunate umpire, who had to deal with a double set of base-lines." It was probably not long after this that the groundman was overheard to remark, with pride and bitterness struggling for mastery in his voice :—

" Well, they won't be able to complain about balls being lost in the long grass *this* year ! "

And eventually, under the tender care of Commander George Hillyard, who was popularly supposed to know every blade on the old " Centre Court "—the *ne plus ultra* of perfection—by name, all the courts on the old ground reached a standard of excellence which made their fame world-wide.



Mlle. Lenglen and Miss McKane on the world-famous Centre Court at Wimbledon.

Sport & General.

Wimbledon in 1886.
"The umpire sat on a chair precariously balanced on a rather decrepit table!"
From a contemporary drawing.

But though the courts helped to make the old ground famous, it is the players and the play, and the development of both, on the old ground and on the new, which have long made Wimbledon the Mecca of the lawn-tennis-playing world. This is no place to catalogue even the names of the successive protagonists of fifty years, much less their doings; though, later on, I want to refer to three or four particular encounters which made a lifelong impression on the memories of all who witnessed them—landmarks in the history of the game. But though the game has always been taken very seriously at Wimbledon, both by the players and the spectators, it has also always had its lighter aspects, some of which may be worth recalling. Naturally, perhaps, the more trivial the incident the more the spectators have been amused by it.

I remember, for example, one that occurred in a match between A. W. Gore—that hardy veteran who has played in more Championships (and won three of them) than any other man, living or dead—and the great French player, Max Decugis. The Frenchman had driven Gore so far out of position that he could only make a despairing effort at a lob, which was so "short" that it seemed doubtful whether it would even get as far as the net. Decugis was waiting to smash it; but at the very last moment, possibly fearing he might touch the net with his racket, he decided to let it pitch. Pitch it did—but it pitched on Decugis's foot, which he failed to remove quickly enough! A simultaneous shout of laughter went up from every stand, not so much at what had actually happened as at the look of incredulous surprise and dismay on the Frenchman's expressive face.

Another incident that tickled the stands happened one very hot afternoon at the new Wimbledon. A linesman on one of the base-lines had for some time given no call, though three or four drives at least had been "well out" beyond his line, and the spectators were signifying their dissent in the usual manner. Indeed, the baking sun, the effects of a perhaps too hearty lunch, and the length of the match had sent him fast asleep. The player at the opposite end thought the time had come to remind the delinquent linesman of his duties, and accordingly, next time he had to serve from the left court, hit the ball as hard as he could straight at the sleeper. And as his aim was excellent the linesman's slumbers were very violently interrupted, to the

A. W. GORE. MAX DECUGIS.
Photographs: Trim.

Ernest Renshaw and Herbert Chipp expressing their disgust at the condition of the court—a scene at Wimbledon forty years ago.
From a contemporary drawing.

accompaniment of shouts of laughter all round the ring.

But amusing incidents, of course, occur on the side courts as well as in the full glare of the Centre Court. I once saw a match held up for at least a couple of minutes by a sparrow, which had become so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the game that, being "shoo"-ed off the court where it had cheekily descended, it merely flew over the net and alighted in the other court, and gave about a dozen encores of this performance, until it apparently decided that it had sufficiently demonstrated how the game ought to be played. I have also seen one player—he was an American, with all the national cuteness—serve two games in succession, the last of one set and the first of the next, without either his opponent or the umpire noticing anything unusual. And, more remarkable still, I once saw the two partners in a ladies' double both serving in the same game, to the great delight of the few spectators at the side of the court, and the utter mystification of all four players, who could not imagine why their hard-fought game should be causing so much amusement among the lookers-on. Luckily, it proved to be the final game of the match; or how the umpire would ever have unravelled the tangle I have no idea.

• But, after all, the things the players do are hardly ever quite as amusing as the things the onlookers say. Or, at any rate, used to say; they are getting more sophisticated now. In the early years Willie Renshaw and H. Grove were one day waging a fierce and brilliant battle, with plenty of fine volleying on both sides—at that time a rare accomplishment—when a young man, doubtless a crack player at his own suburban club, on being asked what he thought of the game, replied with a superior air:—

WILLIE RENSHAW.
Photo: Russell & Sons.

ROPER BARRETT.
Photo: Trim.

"Oh, very fair, very fair—*but, of course, it isn't lawn tennis!*"

I was once watching a long match rather late in the afternoon, between A. W. Gore and (I think) Roper Barrett, some eighteen years ago; the fifth set was just starting. Of two ladies just behind me one was evidently very anxious to get home to dinner, her friend equally determined to stop and see it through.

"We *must* stop and see the finish," she said; "I don't suppose they'll be very long now."

"But," replied the one to whom the call of the dinner-gong was ever becoming more insistent, "*supposing they get to three sets all?*"

A tale told against himself by that best of modern Irish players, the Hon. Cecil Campbell, on the subject of spectators' comments is too good to forbear retelling here. (The narrator, it should be said, has had his naturally dark complexion considerably deepened by the suns of Egypt, where he holds a Government post.) He was playing a match against Max Woosnam; and a near relative of his was sitting in the stand to watch it. As the players came into court a girl who was sitting just behind Campbell's relative said to her friend:—

"Who are these two?"

"Oh," replied the other, "the dark one's Campbell; I think they call the fair one Mac—something or other: Scotch, I suppose."

"Are they any good?" queried the first.

"No, I don't think so," replied the other, to the no inconsiderable delight of Campbell's relative, since the two were about the best home players of the day.

The match's claim to attention thus summarily dismissed, the two young ladies began to discuss dances and frocks, and continued in this pleasant pursuit for about an hour, without paying the faintest attention to an excellent game. At last one of them said:—

"Hullo! They're set all, four all. Which do you want to win?"

"I don't care a bit," was the reply; "except that I rather hope *the Scotchman will beat the Indian!*"

Another snatch of conversation overheard when Roper Barrett—always a subject of popular interest on court (and off)—was playing is not without humour.

"Doesn't Barrett look like a priest?" asked one friend of another; and though the likeness might not immediately strike everybody, the head that covers the brain that has worried all the greatest players of the past does, from behind, possibly suggest the tonsure.

"Yes," was the reply; "and so he ought to; can't you see he's waiting to take the service?"

But on the whole I think I like best the remark of a man who had been watching a men's double of a very "needle" character, in which all four players were notable, not only for their play but for the variety and force of their vocabularies, especially when their partners missed a shot. Seeing this spectator shortly after the match was over, I asked him if it had been a good game.

"Only fairish, so far as the play goes," he answered; "but it was really a remarkably interesting match *to listen to!*"

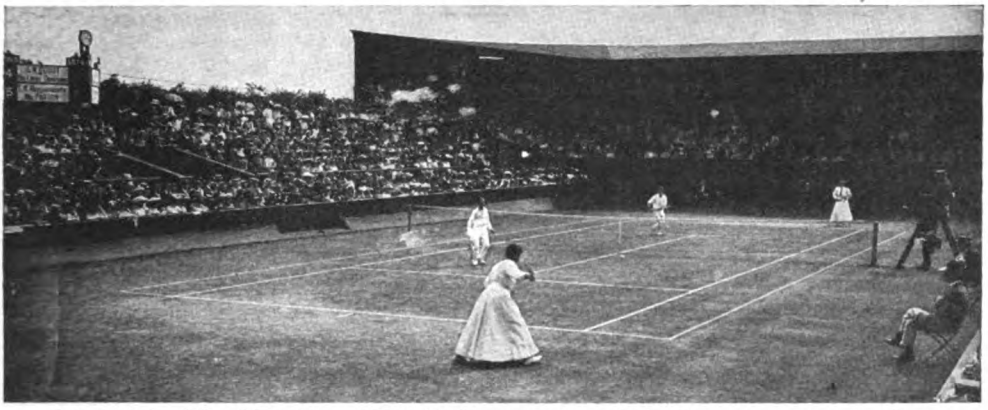
But it would be indecorous, when ostensibly dealing with fifty years of Championship lawn tennis, to neglect altogether the serious side of Wimbledon in favour of the frivolous. Even to mention more than a very few of the scores of exciting encounters I have witnessed would be impossible, but I can select without much effort four matches which I shall remember (if I'm alive) long after the Championship has been won by a Jugo-Slav or a Chinese.

THE DOHERTYS.
Photograph c. Fry.

The first of these, in order of date, is Willie Renshaw *v.* H. S. Barlow in the final round of the All-Comers' Singles in 1889. Renshaw won his first Championship in 1881, and defeated all challengers until 1887, when he did not defend, owing to a "tennis-elbow." In the following year he went out in the third round, but in 1889 went through to the final, where he encountered H. S. Barlow, a big, good-natured player who was so fond of the game that, liking to be on court as long as possible, he would often play a full five-sets match with an indifferent player to whom he could have given half the game, if necessary. He was playing particularly well that year, as he demonstrated by taking the first two sets off Renshaw; but he lost the third at eight—six. In the fourth set, with Barlow leading seven — six, Renshaw was thirty—forty on his own service, and Barlow was therefore within a single point of the match (as he had been once or twice previously). Renshaw served; and, ever daring at a crisis, ran in to volley the return. But as he ran he slipped and fell heavily; worse still, his racket flew far out of his hand. A universal "Oh!" went up from the stands. Barlow had the match at his mercy. Instead, however, of making what must have been a winning shot almost wher-

A. F. WILDING.
Photo: Humphrey Joel.

ever he had hit it to, he gently lobbed the ball back as Renshaw scrambled to his feet. The old Champion snatched for his racket, grabbed it, got to the ball, and somehow or other returned it, and eventually won the holder, in the Challenge round, and so became Champion once more; but that he was lucky to do so nobody who saw the match, or who has just read this account of it, could possibly deny.



Final of the Mixed Doubles at Wimbledon in 1911. Only fifteen years ago, yet how old-fashioned it appears!

Photo: Trim.

rally! And he went on to win the set. But this extraordinary bit of luck didn't seem likely to do him much good, for Barlow, now thoroughly roused, quickly went to five—love in the final set, and once more all seemed over bar the shouting.

As it happened, there was plenty of shouting to come, for Barlow, unable to resist going on a little longer, slacked off again, and Renshaw, coming with a rush, piled on game after game till, amid the most frantic excitement, he got on terms and led at six—five. Barlow, with an expiring effort, made it six all, but that was his last effort; and "Willie" took the next two games and as breathlessly exciting a match, both to players and spectators, as had ever been fought in the twelve years' history of the game. He afterwards beat his brother Ernest, the holder, in the Challenge round, and so became Champion once more; but that he was lucky to do so nobody who saw the match, or who has just read this account of it, could possibly deny.

Mlle. Suzanne Lenglen and Mrs. Lambert Chambers.

Photo: Trim.

The next of my selected matches is the great "international" men's double between France (represented by Max Decugis and that genial giant, A. H. Gobert) and Germany (F. W. Rahe and H. Kleinschroth). This match was in the third round of the doubles in 1911; and it certainly gave English spectators a startling awakening to the possibilities of doubles as played on the Continent. Nothing at all like it had ever been seen at Wimbledon before, though, of course, there had been just as good play in a different style by such pairs as the Dohertys and Smith and Riseley. For sheer sustained excellence of stroke (putting altogether aside the closeness of the encounter) and continuous hard hitting it was a revelation. And the reason for it was that brilliance reacts. Hard hitting is practically

impossible unless the other side is hitting hard as well. Neither pair could have played as they did if they had been opposed by a merely tactical or strategic pair. As it was, each of the four players was out to make every shot a winning shot; and, all four being fine natural players, the spark came as inevitably as when steel strikes flint. The tremendous service of Gobert, the lightning lance-thrusts of the Germans in reply, the vivid decisive smash of Decugis to close the rally—all these made attack the essence of the play; and the match was, to any ordinary double, what a cavalry charge is to trench warfare. It was, in fact, the highest-class double of the present day, played fifteen years before its time, and it left everybody gasping with delight. The Frenchmen won, and won without losing a set; and, moreover, went on to win the Championship, very worthily; but the result, so far as mere stroke-making went, might just as well have gone the other way.

The third match I pick out was A. F. Wilding *v.* Maurice McLoughlin in the Challenge Round of 1913. Wilding had won the title in 1910, and successfully resisted the attempts to deprive him of it in the two following years. But in 1913 the young American Champion, Maurice E. McLoughlin, after having just managed to surmount the dreaded stumbling-block of Roper Barrett in the first round, had gone through the All-Comers with ever-increasing ease; and there were many quite good judges who predicted that America's day had dawned at last, and that the Championship would cross the Atlantic for the first time. Certainly no American present—and there were hundreds of them, all waving flags!—doubted that it would. Service was the young American's speciality. Its terrific speed and high-kicking outwards bound had paralysed nearly all his opponents, who had been forced to stand yards out of court to have even a chance of hitting it. And McLoughlin's volleying was almost as destructive as his service. But there were weak joints in his armour, and if Wilding could withstand the fierce attack long enough to pierce them he might hold his own. He had watched McLoughlin's previous matches attentively and settled on his plan. This was to break down the service—in itself a sufficiently heroic determination—and then to drive away at his opponent's backhand until he had forced a winning opening. This was the only way to win; he stuck to it all through the match, and let nothing put him off it; and he won by three sets to none. He stood right up to take the service that had proved so fatal to McLoughlin's other opponents; took the ball on the rise, and banged it hard back before McLoughlin had time to get into position for his devastating volley. The American could not survive the disappointment of finding his best shots no longer sure winners; and though he played pluckily to the end, he was beaten by a better man. Wilding never played so well in his life before, and he needed to. One particular shot that he made really, I think, won the match for him. In the first set McLoughlin led five—four, and forty—thirty on his own service. He sent down a very extra-special one to give him the set. But Wilding not only got it back, but made an outright winner off it—enough to break anybody's heart! And that was the last time McLoughlin ever led in the match. There was an amusing incident at the very end of the match, when Wilding got within a point of it, served a fault, and then stepped right into the court for his second service, being, of course, promptly foot-faulted! This might have put many a man off; but Wilding only laughed, and won the next two points (and his last Championship) still smiling. But there was no American flag to be seen in the stand as the men came off court!

Last, but not by a long way least, a ladies' match. No lawn-tennis player will have any doubt as to which match I mean—the wonderful fight between Mrs. Lambert Chambers and Mlle. Suzanne Lenglen in the first post-war Wimbledon in 1919. It not only provided the best ladies' tennis ever seen, but such pluck on the part of both players and such delirious excitement among the spectators as no match ever played at Wimbledon has exceeded. Mrs. Chambers had won the Ladies' Championship seven times; Mlle. Lenglen was a French girl of twenty, who had never seen a grass court until she came to Wimbledon that summer. She came, she saw, she conquered. The score (ten—eight, four—six, nine—seven) only very faintly reflects the nature of the struggle; it was the tensest, closest, thrillingest affair imaginable. Mrs. Chambers at one time in the third set had two strokes for victory; the first of them the French girl only just got her racket to by a supreme, and rather fortunate, effort; the second Mrs. Chambers put in the net in attempting a drop shot. She never had the chance again; and the Championship passed for the first time to a Continental player, after a match which did equal credit to winner and loser. It was fought, as many a good match has been since that day, in the presence of the King and Queen; and it is safe to say that they never have witnessed, and never will witness, a better.

THE HOOF OF HIRAM SCHUMWAYS

By

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT, R.I.

I.

LAUZON is a fairy island in a fairy sea. There is a great tide rip always fretting and scouring between Utara and Tike to the east; and between Popakeva and Tata Toku to the west the Paumotan winds, which are legion, blow one against the other, and only cease blowing to blow again, but in Lauzon you can reckon on the winds. Hurricanes are of decent size and mostly keep away, and the lagoon, circled by its ring of singing coral, shows such delicate greens and diaphanous blues that the only painter who ever came to paint it died of distraction—and, they say, whisky.

Oysters brought whisky to Lauzon, brought it in foul and ratty-looking schooners that came and anchored in the lagoon, taking away cargoes of shell and great wealth in the way of pearls, leaving behind them on the land the devil under his chemical name of Alcohol and other names that shall be here unwritten.

I struck the island twice with an interval of two years between my visits, and I sha'n't easily forget my first entry into the lagoon. The season had opened and the water was spread with the canoes of the pearling fleet; a cable length from the northern beach was anchored Marcus's old schooner, the *Golden Light*, and east of her was a brig, and inshore of the brig a thing of eighty tons or less that was in the nature of a ketch-rigged sailing craft, but was different from anything with a keel to it that I had ever set eyes on.

Ships are ships and dogs are dogs, but you sometimes meet in with a dog that isn't more than four legs, a body, and a head and tail stuck together, and Schumways' old ketch was something like that in the way of a ship: it had sticks and strings and a keel and a hull, but it made you laugh—not, however, if Schumways was around and within earshot.

He'd built her himself at Ono-i-lan in the Tongas, he and his four sons, helped by Kanaka labour, and, for all the look of her, Herreshoff himself couldn't have built a better sea boat.

I met him on the beach when I landed: a lantern-jawed, tough-looking old chap with a quid in his cheek; the schooner mate introduced us, but I had little time to take notice of him, the crowd held me.

That beach was as thick as a fair, though it would be thicker in the evening when the

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pearling boats were in. There were girls and dogs and Kanaka children, men from the ships, Chinks and traders come for the pearl and shell buying. There was a broken-down-looking roundabout that would be going in the evening and a tent for a cinematograph theatre, booths where drinks would be sold, soft drinks and drinks hard enough to crack the skull of an elephant, and over all an air of faded festivity that contrasted strangely with the setting of blazing beach and sapphire sky.

THEN out of it all stepped Hallam. Hallam, whom I hadn't seen for years, and from whom I had parted at San Francisco when he went off to the Islands to make a living.

He hadn't done much in that way, but he was alive and decently dressed, a youngish man with a brown silky beard that looked natural and fitting to his face, and clear blue boyish eyes that made him look years younger than he was in reality. But there were other important points about Hallam that wouldn't go into a portrait. He belonged to an old English family, was an Oxford man and well educated, had a keen sense of honour, especially as regards his relationship with women—and no sense of humour in respect to the ordinary things of life. A fatal defect, be the qualities of a man what they may.

"Good Lord, Hallam!" I cried, "you here, of all places in the world!"

He linked his arm in mine and led me along the beach to his house, a three-roomed affair, half veranda, under a tuft of dracæna palms; he produced beer and cigars, and we talked of old times, and then he switched on to himself and his affairs.

"I'm doing a bit here in the way of pearls," said he, "but not much; you see, the traders come here from Papeete and places and they get the pearlers into their debt, sell them all sorts of rubbish on credit, and so get a hold of them. No one can pearl but the Kanakas, that's French law, but French law doesn't stop them being skinned by the traders. Still, I manage to get hold of a few pearls at times at a decent price and sell them at a profit, but I make most of my money through Schumways. Schumways runs nearly all the shows here, from that old cinematograph theatre to the fried banana stall. His sons help. I met him two years or so ago at Vantua; he was there with his sons in that old ketch that's anchored near your schooner. He had lost money in some venture that had to do with copra and was trying to pick up a few dollars by running a motor-car on the beach. There is a mile and a half of hard sand there——"

"A motor-car!" said I.

"Well, he'd picked up a motor-cycle engine that had been part of the cargo of a wrecked steamer; where he got the wheels from I don't know, but the body he made out of packing-cases with a plank for running board; there was the frame of a wind-screen but no glass, the thing held four, and it went. And it gathered in the copra and the cents, for he charged the Kanakas four nuts for a half-mile run and back. He had the petrol on board the ketch, so that cost him nothing.

"I questioned him about this thing, and he told me that the whole idea had come to him from the petrol. He had picked up a lot of the stuff in some way, possibly illicit; anyhow it was there, and seeing the motor-cycle engine in an old go-down he bought it for five dollars. His ingenuity did the rest. He had taken three thousand dollars' worth of nuts when I met him, but the engine was giving out.

"I was amazed by his ingenuity and cleverness, and when he proposed to me to put some money into a venture, I did. I put up two hundred pounds—one thousand dollars—and we went in his boat, he'd built it himself, to Papeete, where he managed to secure a broken-down projecting camera and some old films. He put the camera to rights. The roundabout show you saw on the beach is not ours, it's run by a Dutchman, but all the other shows are; we got the fixings at Papeete, at least Schumways did, then we came here and struck the season and made good money. I've been here ever since. Schumways goes off in the slack times, but I stick here; it suits my health, and I know no place better."

"He must be a genius of sorts," said I, referring to Schumways.

"He is," replied Hallam. "He might be President of the United States only for one defect he has: he's always putting his hoof in it—doing the wrong thing socially."

I thought he was joking, but he was quite serious.

"Socially and in a business sense. He's a born blunderer. With the best heart in the world he manages to muddle things. Haven't you ever come across people like that?"

Reflecting, I found that I had. Who hasn't come across the man who was created by fate to do the wrong thing at the psychological moment when the wrong thing tells?

"There was the French missionary," went on Hallam, "who called here to inaugurate that little shanty of a chapel beyond the pandanus trees on the west side; there was a procession, and with all the goodwill in the world, and without in the least meaning offence, Schumways managed to introduce an old Ju-ju into it—ghastly—and the apology he made was

worse. Dollond, the Dutch trader, got a present from him, gin it was, but it was labelled 'Dutch Courage,' a good-natured sort of a joke, but Dutchmen don't understand that sort of thing, and there was a row, and Dollond was a useful man to us before that row—he isn't now. Oh, I could tell you lots of instances where he has put a perfectly unnecessary hoof into it with all the goodwill in the world, but with disastrous consequences—and Heaven knows what he'll do next."

He spoke those words in a prophetic manner. They *were* prophetic.

II.

A SHADOW came along past the veranda, followed by Schumways himself.

The old man, to be more particular about him, was dressed in a suit of white drill, not dirty but gone dingy from washing, and patched here and there with a fine disregard for sartorial convention and the theory of the homogeneous.

He sat down on a basket-chair and a piece of what had once been bed-ticking and, stretching out a bronzed, claw-like hand, helped himself without invitation to a cigar from the box by Hallam. Then he spat his quid and lit up and began pouring out talk, urged by the pressure of conversation that was always in him and regardless of any subject he might be chipping into, and seemingly regardless of me—but he wasn't.

"No parcel come for us in the new hooker and that new consi'ment of films overdue a month; I'll bust Martin if I ever get a hold of him; the blessed show is dyin' for want of food, it's worser'n seein' a brute creature starvin' for want of fodder; nuthin' that'll run contin'us but the last two thousand foot of the fore hosses of the Pockalipse and les'n five hundred yards of the Gish girl tryin' to make herself smile over the corpse of a Chink. Say, mister, did you ever in the course of your travels try to run a picture show without pictures and find the life fizzling out of it till even the Kanaka children won't bother to look under the canvas? No use in steppin' on the gas and makin' the figures run when they oughta be walkin' or puttin' on the brakes and makin' them go slow motion, no use in gag and patter nor increasin' the band by addin' a ukealey player to the chap that works the concertina. No, sir, there's only so much milk in a cow and only so much life in a picture, and that's as sure as you're an Englishman. Beyond a certain point you can't get a picture to talk its story no more than you can get a Britisher to talk of Bunker's Hill or Boston Harbour, and that's a fact, as sure's my name's Hiram Schumways."

"We'll have to close down, that's all," said Hallam, disregarding the delicate allusion to the Britisher, "and we haven't done so bad with it that we need grumble."

"Oh, I ain't grumblin'," said Hiram. "And where might you be puttin' up in Lauzon?" asked he, turning to me.

I told him I was staying on board my ship, which was in only for a few days to take a small cargo of shell on board, and then I rose to go and he came with me, leaving Hallam smoking in the veranda.

"Now, that chap," said Hiram, "has more brains 'n his elbow than you'd find if you cracked open every skull in Lauzon. Talks Latin, he does, if he gets a touch of fever, just as natural as the plain biled American we're talkin' now. Sufferin' James! look at the way they've stowed that tops'le of yours, blasted tailors!" He paused to contemplate the sight and then led on to where a boat was lying on the beach, a ship's dinghy, white painted and sturdy-looking, only waiting to be pushed off.

"If you've got an hour to spare come aboard with me," said Hiram, "and I'll show you the old *Martha and Jane;* built her, me and the boys, and named her by drawin' lots for the names of females, which is the only names proper for ships, since ships is females. Ahoy there! you durned mahogany image, what do you fancy you're doin'?" We had pushed off, and he paused on his oars whilst a canoe, paddled by a brown boy with white flashing teeth, shot past our bows, then he resumed the sculls. "Yes, sir, they're females as sure as that chap Hallam's a fool man."

"What's his folly?" I asked.

"Kinie," said he, "a girl, a Kanak—fancy a white like him, with that Latin and all, tied up to a Kanak for life; it's sure to be for life with him, no jury marriages for old man Hallam."

I was going to inquire as to the nature of jury marriages and the reason of their unsuitability, but we were alongside the *Martha and Jane*, and next moment I was on her deck.

Yes, she did not belie the impression she gave one at a distance. Footing her deck, she was different from all other vessels I had ever been on, yet one could scarcely give a name to the points of difference. The bulwarks were a bit too high for her length and beam, the foremast seemed out of proportion thick, and the bowsprit cocked a trifle too much as if in emulation of the poop, that was raised by a low deck-house, and with such a trend as to bring to the mind old ships of other days.

As I stood on the deck of the *Martha and*

I rose to go and Hiram came

Jane the weird idea came to me that this was no ship born of the orthodox and rule-of-thumb work of the dockyards, but a true dream ship born from the brain of Hiram Schumways, and incorporating in itself old ancestral recollections of ships dating back, perhaps, to the Heptarchy.

However, I had no time for fancying things, for next moment I was below, seated at a cabin table with a box of cigars by my side, a rummer at my elbow, and Hiram asking "When ?"

"But about Hallam," I said; "suppose he does marry this girl and it's for life, what's the odds ?"

"There's no marriage for life between white and black nor white and chocolate," said Hiram. "I'm not an interferin' man, else from what I've seen of these unions I'd put a spike in this one if it was in me hands to do it. Hallam's a straight man, and that's where the durned fool part of the business comes in; he'll stick to this girl, once the parson overlays them, through

with me, leaving Hallam smoking in the veranda.

thick an' thin, and it'll mostly be thick. I know her, a kitten to look at and a cat to scratch ; I know them all, these Kanaka girls, pretty as jellyfish in the lagoon and twice as blisterin' if you touch them. Oh, Kinie's *straight* enough ; it's the question of warping after marriage that gets me."

He put down his glass and, relighting his pipe, got up and began to show me all sorts of things, gadgets in the way of shelves and slings, cupboards in the most unexpected places, photos stuck to the bulkheads. Photos of men and places, and every photograph had its story, and every story, it seemed to me, had a disastrous ending.

Here was a port in the Louisades, out of which the *Martha and Jane* had been literally kicked, and here was a man, a good pal, who had "gone sour, somehow or another."

I guessed the somehow or another had something to do with Hiram's extraordinary capacity for doing or saying the wrong thing, but I said nothing, letting the old man ramble on, innocent as a child in his exhibition of the doings and the past of the *Martha and Jane*, himself and his four sons.

Then, when he had finished and as I was rising to go, he asked me not to be in a hurry and to stay and help him over a little job he was on, the mending of a photographic camera ; it was a small pocket camera, but a two-men's job, as the thing had to be held while it was treated.

"I want it fixed," said Hiram, "because there ain't another to be had, and it's come into my head that I've got to give Hallam a weddin' present."

It seemed to me that a broken camera was a very poor sort of wedding present, but I said nothing.

"It's come into my head that I've got to give Hallam a weddin' present," said Hiram, "somethin' unexpected, somethin' with a bit of a surprise in it ; gin or tobacco's no use, for it has to be for her as well as him. I was botherin' and puzzlin' over the matter when somethin' jumped up in my head and said to me : 'How about a photograph of them both framed *and* glazed ?'"

" But," I said, " they'll see you taking it, and then where will your surprise be ? "

" That's just the point," said Hiram; " they've got not to see me doin' it; it'll have to be a snapshot of them both canoodling, taken unknownst to them."

" Rather difficult."

" Oh, Lord, no," said Hiram. " When a chap and a girl is together they've no eyes but for themselves ; I'll catch 'em spoonin' on the reef, or maybe in a canoe together or somethin' ; it's like huntin' for turtle, you only have to bide your time."

" When's the marriage to be ? " I asked.

" When the missionary makes his next call," replied Hiram. " Maybe a month from now."

I left the old man finishing his work on the camera and, hailing a passing canoe, put ashore. I was anxious to see Kinie. I saw her next day.

III.

NEXT day, walking along the beach to the westward with Hallam, I tackled him on the marriage business.

" I hear you are going to be married," said I.

" That's so," said he; " who told you ? "

" Schumways."

" Oh, did he ? What did he say about it ? "

" Oh, nothing."

" I bet you anything he said more than that," laughed Hallam. " The old man is against it, and he's not the person to hold his tongue if he's got a conviction in his head. Come, spit it out; what did he say ? "

" Well, as a matter of fact, speaking generally, he doesn't like the idea of marriage between whites and the coloured races."

" I know," said Hallam, " and in a general way he's right. But if a man comes upon a woman, sweet, without affectation, kind-hearted, a true child of nature, incapable of jealousy or petty meanness, what does it matter if she is a Polynesian or a European? I have made up my mind always to live in the Islands, so there is no question of taking her to Europe, and what European girl would exile herself for the sake of marrying me—even if I knew one, which I don't ? I have cut myself off from England, and all my people are dead. I am alone in the world, so if the affair turns out wrong nobody will suffer but myself. Ah, there she is; now you will see what I mean."

Kinie was seated with three other girls under the shade of the one and only bread-fruit that grew in this part of the atoll They were stringing beads. I picked her out at once from the others ; she was the prettiest of the four—and the stoutest. The only thing that marred her face was the nose, rather spread, after the fashion of Polynesian noses, but she was pretty, decidedly pretty, especially when her face lit up as now, with Hallam standing above her and talking to her.

He did not introduce me, just stood and talked to her about the beads she was stringing ; and now as I stood and watched them it came to me that there was something in Kinie's face and manner and voice that was not attractive, at least to me. Something light and irresponsible—something wanting.

Yet there was a certain decision, too, and a protrusion of the underlip at times. Well, it is easy to criticize, but it seemed to me that Kinie, child of nature as she might be, kind-hearted and all the rest of it, was a person capable of holding her own in married life, and even perhaps a bit more than her own.

Then when she got up I noticed how short she was, short and stout, to put the matter plainly, and this defect was not reduced by her girdle of dracæna leaves.

Then we walked on and Kinie returned to her companions.

" Well, what do you think of her ? " asked Hallam.

" Charming," I replied.

We had turned back to the eastern end of the beach and presently we met Hiram, and I could see by the bulge in his coat that he had the camera on him ready for the photography business when he got the chance.

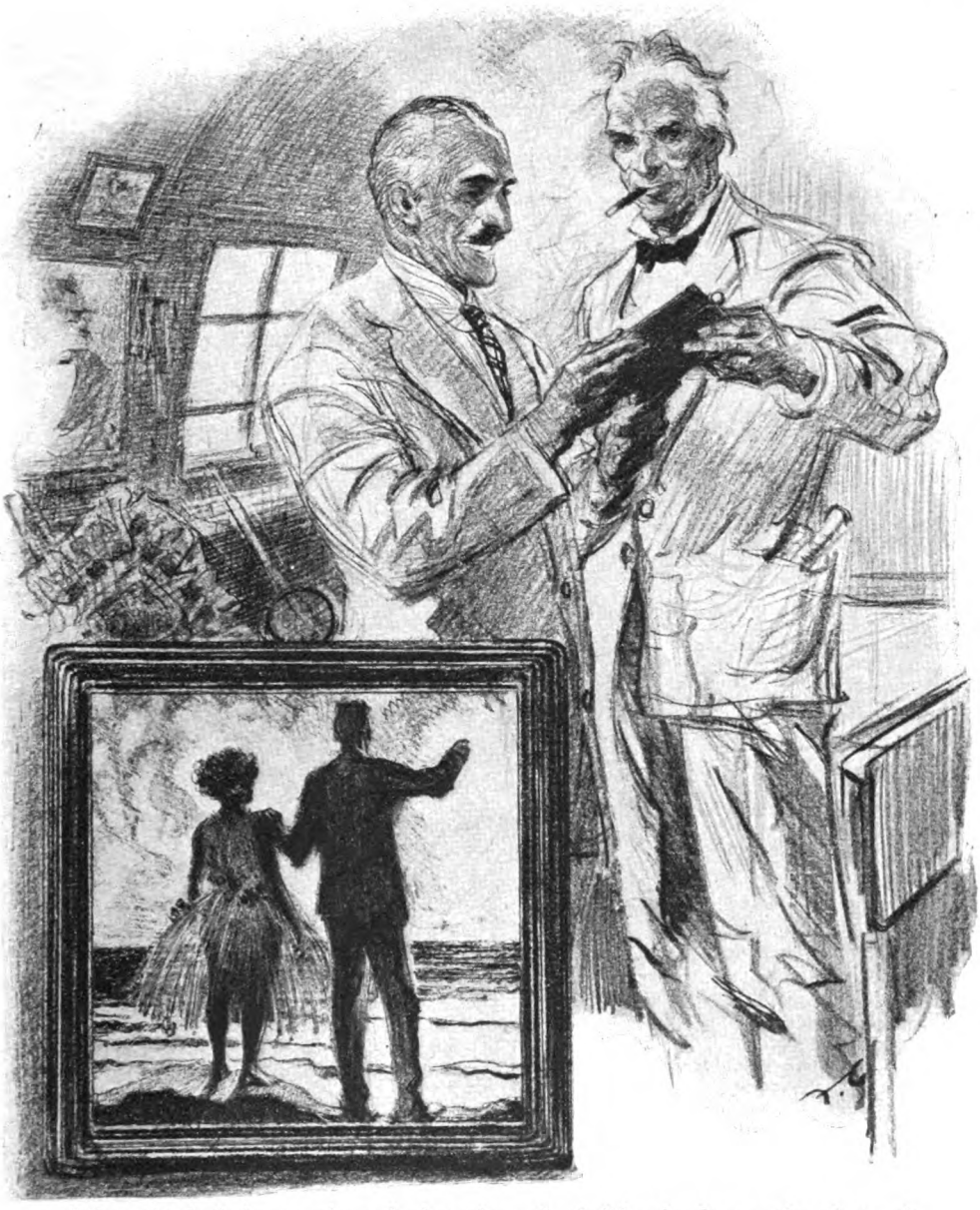
Two days later, having taken our small cargo of shell, we put out, and a day or two later Hallam and Kinie and Hiram and the whole business had almost passed from my mind; for so it is in the Islands, where brilliant scenes only appear to fade again, where men are always meeting for a moment to part for evermore.

IV.

A YEAR later, putting into Papaleete and dropping anchor in the bay before the little white town, I saw beyond a B.P. boat anchored to south of us an apparition of the sea, the *Martha and Jane*, no less, swinging to her moorings and looking just as funny and dirty as ever.

I took a shore boat and put alongside of her, where Hiram's eldest son told me his Pop was ashore, most likely at the Club, and there a little later I found him, in his best suit, looking almost respectable, a cigar in his mouth and a soft drink at his elbow.

He was talking to the mate of the B.P. boat and a schooner captain, talking openly and without restraint of his doings and dealings, and a venture he had just pulled off in the way of precious coral. His back was towards me, and he was proceeding to the



Hiram fetched down a framed photo from the bulkhead. It was the photo of a man and a girl looking out to sea.

details of *bêche-de-mer* and the prices ruling in the Canton market when, rising to get a light, his eyes fell on me.

His hand flew out and next moment, the mate and the schooner captain taking their departure, we were seated, *bêche-de-mer* forgotten and up to our eyes in talk.

I told him what I had been doing in the past year—" and Hallam ? " I asked.

Hiram's face clouded.

" Oh, don't talk to me about that chap," said he ; " him and me has parted company. Looked as if we might have been life partners and all was bust up in a minit. A fool man, I told you he was, and that's what he is and what he'll always be. You hadn't left that place a week when the new set of films came along, and the show was just beginnin' to get

on its legs again when the bust-up came. Come on board the old *Martha* and I'll show you what did it."

We settled our score and departed, taking a boat to the *Martha*, where, in the little stuffy cabin, Hiram fetched down a framed and glazed photo from the bulkhead on which it was hanging. It was the photo of a man and a girl, Hallam and Kinie. It was a back view photo; they were standing on the reef, looking out to sea, and Hallam's hand was on Kinie's shoulder.

Hallam looked all right, at least as right as a man can look when his back is presented to the camera; but Kinie! That squat figure beside the tall Hallam, those short legs, that dracæna kilt—sticking out round her—the camera had caught all her defects, and added to them after the fashion of cameras.

I was silent for a moment. Then I said:—

"But why did you take them like this?"

"Take them like that?" said Hiram, "Why, what's wrong with it? Ain't they as live as nature, and him with his hand on her shoulder? How'n the nation could I take them any other way without them seein' me? Now I'll tell you. I was huntin' them for days and never got a chance till one evenin' about an hour before sundown I caught them just like that; in a snap I'd bagged them.

"Took the picture on board and developed it, came out as clear as paint. Then I made the frame for it and cut down the glass from an old picture of General Washin'ton, and framed and glazed the durned thing, did it up in a parcel and wrote: 'For Hallam and Kinie, a weddin' present from Hiram Schumways' on it. See?

"Took it ashore, not knowin' I was takin' a live bumshell in my pocket, called at Hallam's house, and found him and her on the verandy.

"'Hullo, Hallam!' says I.

"'Hullo yourself!' says he.

"'Hot day,' says I, not knowin' how to open the subject.

"'It is,' says he.

"'A thirsty day,' I says, and he fetches out drinks.

"A gin and tonic livened things up, and I says: 'Here's to the health of you both and a happy marriage—got any weddin' presents yet?'

"'No,' he said. 'I'm not lookin' for any in this place; the best weddin' present is Kinie—I don't want no other,' he says.

"'Maybe,' says I; 'but I've got one for you, and I want it off my hands lest the glass gets broken, but you aren't to open it till the day,' I says, and out I hands the parcel.

"Hallam takes it and laughs and puts it on a shelf and we does some more talking and has another drink, and off I goes, easy in my mind now I'd got shut of the thing.

"Well, I gets on board, and two days after, gettin' along for sundown, off comes Hallam in a canoe; I could tell somethin' was up by his face.

"Takes him down here to the cabin. He sits just where you are and breaks loose, showin' me the picture.

"'You're a nice friend,' says he. Then out it came.

"Kinie wouldn't be easy till she'd opened that parcel; he told her not, but she stole into the house unbeknownst to him and slipped the paper off. Directly disobeying him, mind you.

"Well, what does she say when she sees that picture? She goes into a boilin', blazin' rage, and says it's another girl; says to Hallam: 'Who's this girl, and you with your hand on her shoulder?' You see, she'd never seen herself before and she didn't like the look of herself in that picture."

"I should think not," said I.

"Maybe," said Hiram, "but it's her, and how was I to know she'd get her bristles up at seein' herself, and how was I to know that the Kanaka mind of her, not likin' the look of herself, would go against all reasonin' and knowledge, and swear the picture was another girl's?"

"I don't know," said I, "but women aren't always as logical as they might be, specially when it comes to a matter like this—but heave ahead."

"Well," said Hiram, "I says to Hallam when he'd boiled down a bit, I says: 'Give me the picture and leave it to me and I'll go and have a talk with her; I'll talk to her like a Dutch uncle,' I says, 'and you can go with me and hear what I say.'

"WE put ashore and we goes to the house where Kinie lived with her old mother, a shack by them pandanus trees, and there was Kinie seated at the door mixin' some stuff in a bowl for her old mother's dinner.

"'Kinie,' I says, 'it was I took the sun picture'—I took it from my pocket—'and if you believe that Hallam here has been courtin' any other girl I'll soon prove you he hasn't, for there ain't more than thirty girls of your age here on Lauzon and there's not another of them like that,' I says, holdin' the picture to her. 'Look at them legs of yours,' I says, and with that she up and flung her mother's dinner in my face. 'Serve you right,' says Hallam to me, and at that she up and flung the bowl in his.

"'Serve you right,' says I, and those were the last words I had with him.

Kinie flung the bowl in his face.

"He left the island a week later, went south to Tari, I believe."

He hung the picture up again and turned to other matters, more especially a good idea he had of starting a bathing beach in a little bay south of San Francisco that he alone knew the possibilities of, a white sand beach that only wanted a little capital put in it to set it crawling with girls in Paris hats and jinks in one-piece bathing suits. He proposed that I should share in this venture, but I gently refused; the vision of the results of Hiram's hoof on that Paris-hatted beach might be alluring to a writer of stories, but not to a prospective partner with money in the business.

ONE OF THEIR QUARRELS

By ARNOLD BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

I.

THE yacht *Alice II.*, a ketch of one hundred and eight tons, with auxiliary engine and a crew of nine, was just leaving the small haven of the Rotterdam Yacht Club, whose hospitality she and her owner, James Thorpe, had been enjoying for two days. The haven was studded with many mooring posts, to each of which a yacht was tied up; so that there was little room to spare for the manœuvring of a biggish, beamy, and sluggish craft like *Alice II.*—easily the most important vessel in the cove.

Now Rotterdam is one of the greatest river ports of the whole world, and it is certainly the most feverish and busy of all European ports whatever. At the open mouth of the haven the mighty tide of the Maas streamed past at a speed of four or five knots, and the rushing water thereof was covered with tugs, motor-barges, sailing-barges, passenger steamers, sailing-ships, terrific ferries, and Atlantic liners—not to mention dredgers and such monstrosities as floating cranes. But chiefly tugs, of which scores and scores rushed to and fro, navigated by their skippers with more than the nonchalance of taxi-drivers navigating taxis along the Strand.

The wind was fresh; flags and burgees stood out pretty straight. The much-disturbed water was lolloping and splashing against the banks of the haven; a few rats as big as rabbits were to be seen foraging on the deep sides of the banks; sirens and whistles were sounding menaces everywhere; steam-cranes were creaking as they raised huge burdens of barrels, cheeses, and grain out of the holds of ships or off wharves, and flung them down again like toys. And railway bridges and road bridges were swinging high gigantic arms on steel joists to let trains and lorries and people go across or to let ships go through.

In brief, the scene was bewildering to an extreme degree, and Captain Abbott, who possessed the two finest qualities of a skipper—to wit, a strong sense of danger and a gloomy outlook upon the future—was glad that he had a Dutch pilot on board. Captain Abbott and the pilot between them were moving the *Alice II.* out of the haven stern foremost. The dinghy, with a crew of two, was afloat carrying ropes to mooring posts and generally executing shouted orders from the poop—orders of which details need not be given here, as this story is in essence domestic and of a purely family nature.

The family, now leaning critically against the rail on the port quarter and watching the operations, consisted of efficient James Thorpe, his efficient wife Alice, and their daughter, who was usually addressed as Alice II. The yacht had been called *Alice II.* because the name of Jim's previous yacht, a mere fifty-tonner with a crew of only four, was *Alice*. The increase in the size of Jim's yacht was a measure of the increase in his prosperity since the earlier days of *Alice*. Real yachtsmen are always selling the smaller for the larger if they are getting on in the world, or selling the larger for the smaller if they are not. The Thorpe family were beyond doubt real yachtsmen. They lived for yachting, and occasional sea-sickness never daunted them. As for Alice II., aged four, she had had a narrow escape of being actually born on *Alice*. (*Alice II.* was acquired after the birth of Alice II. It may sound complicated, but is not.)

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Right at the mouth of the yacht-haven was a station for tugs, and just as *Alice II.* was feeling her way out backwards, a tug swayed casually to a berth, and her nose stopped about a yard from *Alice II.'s* stern. The skipper, not used to such circus performances, was alarmed, but neither the Dutch pilot nor the Dutch captain of the tug showed any sign of fever, though the two men in the dinghy certainly did. And the family, while outwardly tranquil, were aware of qualms.

"Come along, darling," said Mrs. Thorpe "Time for your afternoon snoozelet."

"Is it, daddy?"

Jim Thorpe, tall, with a tendency to bulk, glanced at his little, slim girl of a wife (aged thirty-three, but not looking it) with a secret appeal.

"It is," said Alice Thorpe, staring down her mass of a husband. So that was that. Mother and daughter disappeared below.

When Alice returned to the deck there was a considerable noise of voices both on the yacht and in the dinghy, and the engine-room bell was ringing a new order about every thirty seconds.

"Look out for that dinghy," cried Alice, leaning over. Jim Thorpe was making the same cry, but only in his mind. He was not like Alice, of whom it might be said that, as a rule, whatever came into her mind went out through her lips.

"Shut up," Jim remonstrated. "Don't confuse them. They know exactly what they're doing."

"Do they? Well, they'll have the dinghy nipped between the yacht and that post in half a minute."

"Not they!"

But in about exactly half a minute the dinghy did get nipped, just as the tiresome Alice had predicted, and the general outcry was multiplied.

"Good gracious!" Alice exclaimed, with all her efficiency. "I never saw such clumsiness. And why is Pete in the dinghy at all?"

The post was immovable, and the hundred tons of the yacht uncontrollably and ruthlessly moved towards the post; and then there was a startling sound of crushed wood.

"A dinghy smashed!" said the skipper under his breath, gloomily justified of his pessimism.

Then one side of the dinghy rose up on the post and the dinghy suddenly filled with water; and the two men sprang out of her, clutched madly at the mizzen shrouds, and somehow got aboard the yacht. Jim had seen panic and the fear of death upon their bronzed faces. The yacht forged safely ahead, dragging after her the nearly submerged dinghy, in which oars and other gear were floating. A rope attached to the mooring post was tightening as the yacht moved.

"Ye'll have to cut that rope, Alf!" the skipper shouted to the mate. "Get your knife ready and cut it!" he repeated, savagely.

The rope was cut, and the tail of it left hanging round the post, a memorial to all Rotterdam of the inefficiency of British seamanship. The yacht was now safely away in the stream.

But there had been an accident, and the drowned dinghy dragging astern was the awful desolating proof of it. Alice had never before seen a marine mess, and she was outraged by this one. When the dinghy had been salved, and hauled up on its davits and emptied of a ton or so of water, it looked better, for not much damage had been done, the wretched boat having slipped under the yacht's quarter instead of being squeezed to matchwood. But red-headed Pete was now lying on deck, feeling his ankle and having his ankle felt. The man could not stand.

"Carry him down into the port-cabin. He'll be more comfortable there," Jim Thorpe ordered, curtly.

"But Alice is asleep there. It's her cabin," said Mrs. Jim, tensely.

"Take Alice out, then, and put her in your cabin—or mine," said Jim, still more curtly. "There's no room for a crippled man in the forecastle. He must be made comfortable, and he can't be comfortable in that box-room of a forecastle with eight other men and a kitchen in it.

II.

"JIM," said Alice, quietly, when she finished, with considerable efficiency, putting a cold compress, surrounded with flannel, upon the severely sprained ankle of Pete, "I want just two words with you."

They were in the narrow corridor, at the door of the port-cabin, which Alice had closed, and she led the way into Jim's own cabin, which was on the starboard side; and, having got him within, she closed the door of that cabin also. The yacht was breasting the densely-populated stream of the Maas, and on deck the excitement of the accident had died down. But below, between the pair in Jim's cabin, the shut-in atmosphere vibrated to unseen forces more dangerous than electricity. The big man and the small woman, who till that moment had talked together (in the presence of others) with an admirable sweet reasonableness, were now formidably glaring. Their bodies almost touched, for the cabin was not quite as large as a drawing-room on a

liner, and Jim's high head was bent a little to avoid a beam in the ceiling of his private apartment.

"Well, child?" growled Jim.

"You made me look very silly just now in front of the captain and the mate and all of them, insisting on Pete being put in Alice's cabin when you knew I strongly objected to it."

"Not a bit," Jim replied. "I was perfectly polite. So were you, as far as that goes. Also, I carried the kid out myself, and she's asleep now all right. Where's the harm done?"

"The harm is this. This yacht is our summer home. Am I the mistress of the house, or am I not? I never interfere on deck——"

"Oh, yes, you do, my girl."

"I do *not*—and I don't expect you to interfere in the cabins."

"Oh, don't you?"

"No. I certainly do not. Imagine that great hulking fellow in little Alice's cabin! It's simply disgusting. If a dustman slipped on the front steps at home and hurt himself, would you bring him into the flat and put him into Alice's bed *there?*"

"No, I shouldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because the kid's bed there is only a cot, and Pete wouldn't hold in it."

Mrs. Jim stamped her foot, but she could not stamp hard because she was wearing indiarubber soles.

"Moreover," Jim continued, "the two cases are not quite on all fours. This is a——"

"They are exactly the same," Mrs. Jim insisted. "And there's another thing. It was all Pete's fault. I asked you before: Why was he in the dinghy at all? He isn't in the dinghy's crew. He's steward, and of course he only gets into a muddle in the dinghy."

"Pardon me. Pete's as handy a man as anybody aboard the vessel. He was in the dinghy because he likes to vary his work sometimes—surely that's natural! This isn't the Royal Navy."

"Then he must take the consequences, like anybody else. You always favour him. And if there's any difficulty between him and me you always take his side. I sha'n't forget the trouble I had in the old yacht."

The first honeymoon quarrel between the married pair had indeed happened in *Alice*, and apropos of precisely red-headed Pete.

"Anyhow, Pete was quite innocent then."

"I absolutely insist on him being taken to the forecastle, where he ought to be. You understand—absolutely."

"That's your ultimatum, is it?" said Jim, darkly. He was reflecting that if he allowed himself to be defeated in this battle he would lose all moral authority for ever.

"Well, my heated darling, I'll just tell you two things. First, you're a horrid little piece, and a snob, and entirely without the milk of human kindness. Why on earth *shouldn't* the poor fellow be treated decently, as a fellow-creature, for once? Second, that he is not going to be moved back to the forecastle—not if I know it! Is that clear?"

It is astonishing with what perilous foolishness married people can behave to one another when prestige seems to be at stake, but somehow they will do it.

"Very well," said Mrs. Jim, raising her chin.

At that moment a hopping noise was heard in the corridor. Jim opened the door to see what was happening. It was happening that Pete, feeling ill at ease in the solitary splendour of the port-cabin, had arisen from his bunk and was hopping through the saloon towards the forecastle, his natural home. Mrs. Jim watched his retreating figure, and saw his great dirty hands imperilling the beautiful upholstery of the saloon as he balanced his way on one leg over the floor of the heaving vessel.

"Of course, his bandage will all come loose," she observed, dryly. "A lot of use it was me taking so much trouble over him."

III.

THE episode would have ended at this point if the married belligerents had had as much common sense as the rest of mankind. Pete's independent and instinctive action had given Alice a clear, notable triumph in the affray, and yet a triumph which could not humiliate Jim. But with all their efficiency and all their mutual affection and other fine qualities, the married belligerents suffered from a lack of common sense. In the supply of that precious commodity they were our inferiors. And therefore the episode did not by any means end with the vanishing of red-headed Pete into the forecastle and the evacuation of Alice II.'s cabin. The personal dignity of the parties had been engaged, and the question of personal dignity had been the source of nearly all their marital differences. Each wanted to laugh lightly and make peace, but personal dignity prevented either of them from laughing.

"As usual, you've been very inconsiderate to me," said Mrs. Jim. "And, of course, I shall expect you to apologize."

To which Jim replied:—

"Expect—by all means. Keep on expecting with all your might, my child." His tone was cold and cutting as a razor.

"And seeing how carefully I've looked after the ankle of *that man*," said Mrs. Jim,

Mrs. Jim saw his great dirty hands imperilling the beautiful upholstery of the saloon as he balanced his way on one leg over the floor of the heaving vessel.

following her own thought and ignoring Jim's, "I don't quite see the point of your saying that I've no kindness in me. However——"

And yet that night at dinner, which in the regretted absence of Pete was served by the second steward, the atmosphere was as smooth as the canals and rivers upon which *Alice II.* was so beautifully sailing in a fair wind. The most penetrating of stewards could not have detected a false note, much less a rift within the lute. And little Alice, upon whom both parents were lavishing all sweetness, was present at the soup stage of the meal as a special treat. Mrs. Jim had suggested this departure from the routine of discipline, and Jim had agreed to it with positive ardour. The fact was, of course, that the belligerents desired to be alone as little as possible.

"About where shall we be to-morrow afternoon, Jim?" Mrs. Jim inquired, graciously.

"I should think not so awfully far from Flushing, my pet," Jim graciously replied, stroking his offspring's golden hair.

"Then I think I *shall* take the steamer to Folkestone," said Mrs. Jim. "With all those urgent things to see to at the flat. . . . And Alice had better go with me, hadn't she?"

For a moment Jim, with all his acuteness, was at a loss to understand what Mrs. Jim was at, for there had been no previous suggestion whatever that Mrs. Jim should return to the flat, or that there was anything urgently needing her attention at the flat. Then he comprehended. He had not apologized to her, and never would apologize (deeming himself, of course, to have been entirely in the right in this dispute); she had therefore determined to show her displeasure, and prove her unconquerable mind, by leaving him alone on the yacht and taking Alice II. with her. But she wanted to achieve her purpose smoothly, and without giving any hint to the child or to the little world of the yacht that a serious state of war existed. Hence she was displaying her remarkable skill in the art of acting. But Jim also could act, and Jim's mind also was unconquerable.

He said, charmingly:—

"I think you're quite right, my dear, though I shall be very sorry to lose my two darlings. Of course, if you'd like me to come with you——"

"Oh, no! You must finish the cruise, dear."

"Very well, then. We'll keep going all night. You can take the train at Vlake, and you'll be in plenty of time to catch the steamer at Flushing."

AND so it came to pass. Early the next morning he helped her to pack, and Alice II. felt obliged also to help her mamma to pack; he gave her money; he saw them both off at Vlake station; and very trim, neat, charming, and efficient mother and daughter looked as they leaned their heads out of the carriage window and waved good-bye to daddy. It was a lovely morning. But for some twenty hours husband and wife had not exchanged one word save in the presence of others.

"Women are staggering," Jim reflected, naively. "Absolutely staggering." Just as if he hadn't been married for six years or so. He did, however, show some gleam of an appreciation of the fact that men also are staggering, when he asked himself: "I wonder why I didn't apologize to her? It would have cost me nothing." Then he resumed his masculine bias by adding: "No! Not on your life! It would have cost me my position in the home."

IV.

ALICE and Alice II. sat together side by side in a red-velvet-covered compartment of the train to Flushing. It was a boat-train, true enough, but a boat-train that stopped at every station. So that as she gazed casually at cows, dykes, steeples, barges apparently sailing through fields, maids and matrons in high-waisted "native" costume with gold-ornamented head-pieces, station-gardens, and windmills, and explained the various phenomena of the journey to Alice II., Alice had plenty of opportunity to reflect upon the quarrel. Like all their quarrels, it had arisen out of almost nothing, and a word, even a tone, might have stifled it at birth. The important thing, however, was not the originating cause, but the nature of the issue engaged. And the issue in this particular quarrel was about the same as in all their previous quarrels—namely, the rights and dignity of man and the rights and dignity of woman.

"Jim is an idiot," thought Alice; and then: "I am an idiot too!"

But idiots are apt to have a powerful sense of dignity, the same as the wise. Alice could not imagine how the quarrel would end, but of course it would end; and the end would be delicious, as the ends of all their quarrels always were. In the meantime Alice felt a fine artistic interest in the quarrel, and contemplated calmly its growth and conceived different dodges for concluding it with advantage to herself—an advantage which, having won it, she would cheerfully throw away as soon as the affair was over. She contemplated also, with satisfaction, the vision of Jim alone in the yacht. Put on what proud, careless air he

might, he would certainly be rather miserable that evening!

She liked the thought of his misery; and she assured herself that *she* would not be miserable—and the assurance was not the least in the world convincing. Certainly she had Alice II., whereas Jim had nobody except his silly old captain and his sillier old red-headed Pete.

Alice II. had begun by being prim, more prim than her mother. But soon Alice II. grew tired of dangling her legs a dozen inches off the floor, and she slipped down and carried out a complete inspection of the compartment, and fell violently once when the train stopped with a jerk. Being very like her parents, she did not cry over her fall; she had a full share of pride. Then she climbed on to her mother's lap, and hugged her mother with much love.

"You're very demonstrative this morning, my pet," observed Alice.

Strange that Alice II. knew precisely the meaning of that long word which she had never heard before.

"Mummy, won't daddy be awful sad all by himself?

"Mummy, when's daddy coming home?

"Mummy, why didn't daddy kiss you at the station?"

"Well, he was very busy with the luggage," Alice answered the last question uneasily. Nothing could be hidden from the child. The child knew as well as anybody that trouble was in the air. Nevertheless the demeanour of both the child's parents in her presence had been unexceptionable in its show of friendliness and affection. Alice ought to have made Jim kiss her. She hated nothing more than to give away the fact of a family quarrel to the innocent child. They, idiots both of them, were gods to the child. In another minute Alice II. was fast asleep, and Alice could feel through her thin frock the warm, regular breathing of infancy. And she squeezed the child and woke her.

THE train had seemingly no intention of ever arriving at Flushing; but it did arrive. And there was a Flemish horse on the platform dragging bits of luggage about at the end of a long chain: a spectacle which made Alice II. shriek with glee. Alice arranged matters efficiently with a porter and walked off the platform and turned to the left in obedience to printed instructions for boarding the steamer. And then she heard a call in Dutch-English:—

"This way for passports, please."

At first she had an idea that the Dutch authorities were going to present her with a passport for the purpose of returning to England, and she tripped forward until she came to a wide gap with the view of a steamboat in the middle distance. Just at this gap was a table, with a bald-headed official seated thereat. He at once perceived that Alice was English, and he addressed her in her own language:—

"Your passport, please, madam."

"But—but I haven't got a passport," Alice replied. A dreadful truth vaguely took shape in her mind.

"But it is forbidden to go on board the steamer without a passport."

Now she saw the dreadful truth very clearly. With Jim she had gone to various foreign countries in the yacht, which, belonging to an officially recognized yacht club, flew the blue ensign of the Royal Naval Reserve. On arriving in a foreign port Customs officers had come aboard for a formal inspection, but no officer had ever asked for passports. She and Jim had just walked ashore, and no questions put and no demand made. Similarly for re-embarkation. And similarly on the return to Britain. Yachting people were exempt from all passport complications. But on the present occasion Alice was no longer a yachting person. She was a mere common traveller. She explained matters to the urbane official, whose urbanity, however, proved to be of no help to her.

"But what am I to do?" she asked, plaintively. In her war-days that celebrated efficiency of hers was habituated to dealing successfully with every crisis that arose, but now her efficiency failed her.

"Ah!" exclaimed the official suddenly. "Here is a gentleman from the office of the British Consul here. Good afternoon, sir," he greeted a young man who had put down a passport on the table. "You are going to England, sir?"

"On leave," said the young Englishman, who, indeed, was dressed in holiday style and had a bright face to match.

But immediately the Dutch official began to state the case of Alice, and Alice joined in with explanatory remarks, the young man's face hardened into the face which he wore in the Consular office. He was well used to petitioners who had foolishly omitted formalities, and, moreover, on the very threshhold of his holiday, he objected to being worried with professional affairs. He was most definitely off duty. He said, finally:—

"If you go to Rotterdam, or to the British Legation at The Hague, and fill up the proper forms and furnish references, you will be able to obtain a temporary passport, but you wouldn't get it under four or five days at the earliest. . . . Where is this yacht of yours, madam?"

"Near Vlake."

"Your passport, please, madam."
"But—but I haven't got a passport," Alice replied.

"Anybody on board who could help you?"

"My husband, the owner."

"Well, then, madam, I think your best course would be to go back at once to your husband." And, his own passport having been inspected, he raised his hat and vanished away in the direction of the steamer.

Alice very unjustly considered him to be a rather unpleasant young man. "Return to your husband!" "Return to your husband!" The young man had not the slightest notion of the horror implied in his words. Go back—ignominiously! Go back—defeated! She cursed men in her heart, and particularly the ex-Kaiser Wilhelm, author of wars and therefore of passports.

"Darling," she said, sweetly, bending down to Alice II., "we must go back to daddy." And the thoughtless child clapped her hands.

"There's a train——" the helpful official was begininng.

"Can you tell me where I can hire a car?" she asked, and to herself: "Anyhow, it shall cost him as much as possible."

But supposing the yacht had already left her moorings!

V.

THAT same afternoon, which happened to be full of sunshine, Jim Thorpe, the august owner of the one-hundred-and-eight-ton auxiliary ketch *Alice II.*, sat on his deck with a book in front of him. But he was not reading and could not read. For he was in a state of nervous apprehension surpassing anything in his experience since the other war—the Great War. The same thought ran round and round in his mind: "What a Hades of a row when we do meet!" Then he heard the noise of an automobile approaching on the long, tree-shaded, straight road that skirted the canal. He jumped up, and in the distance saw in the car two figures that looked like his womenkind, together with certain luggage, the aspect of which seemed familiar.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed to the captain, who came aft to meet him. "They've come back. I wonder what's happened?" He acted as well as he could, but not too well.

"I thought it was them, sir," said the captain, anxiously, and glad of an occasion for anxiety.

The car stopped on the quay alongside the yacht.

"*Hello!* *Hello!*" cried Jim, despite his notorious manliness almost shaking with fright. "What's this, my children?"

"Missed the steamer," called Alice, nicely, and with a calm smile.

The chauffeur lifted down the baby, whom Jim and the captain passed across the abyss that separated the quay wall from the yacht's side. Alice stopped the chauffeur from unloading the luggage.

"We were just waiting for the lock to open to put to sea. How lucky you had the idea of hiring a car!" The first statement was quite untrue, for Jim had no intention of putting to sea.

"Jim!" said Alice, persuasively, "just come here for a moment, will you?"

He obeyed, saying to himself: "She's playing with me like a cat with a mouse. What an idiot I was to let her go off like that!"

The assembling crew, aroused from torpor by the unexpected *contretemps* saw the car turn and drive off with Mr. and Mrs. James Thorpe, while Alice II. ran forward to her friend, red-headed Pete, who was stretched on deck near the forecastle-hatch.

"Jim," began Alice, in the speeding car—the chauffeur could not possibly hear for the loud rustling of the trees—"I wanted to have a bit of a chat with you, and I thought this was the best way. There's no more privacy on a hundred-ton ship than there used to be on a fifty-tonner. I was wrong to run off like that, and when *I'm* wrong I prefer to say so frankly. I don't agree at all with the attitude you took about that cabin, but I can see now you were acting for the best, and you honestly thought you were right, and so, of course, you couldn't conscientiously apologize."

"Oh, my child!" said Jim. "Please! Please! I dare say I was wrong, though I didn't think so, as you say." His heart was magically lightened. For once he had been lucky. She hadn't been near the steamer. She hadn't found out about the passport snag. She had just taken fright at the enormity of her rash foolishness in leaving him in a tantrum, and had turned tail. And she had had such fear of missing the yacht that she had hired a car. She had simply flown back to him.

"*But*," she continued, and Jim's heart was heavy once more—heavier than ever, "why did you let me and Alice II. go away when you knew perfectly well that we couldn't get on to the steamer without a passport?"

"I—I——" the coward stammered.

"Did you know or didn't you know? Do be straight and tell me the truth."

"Yes, I knew."

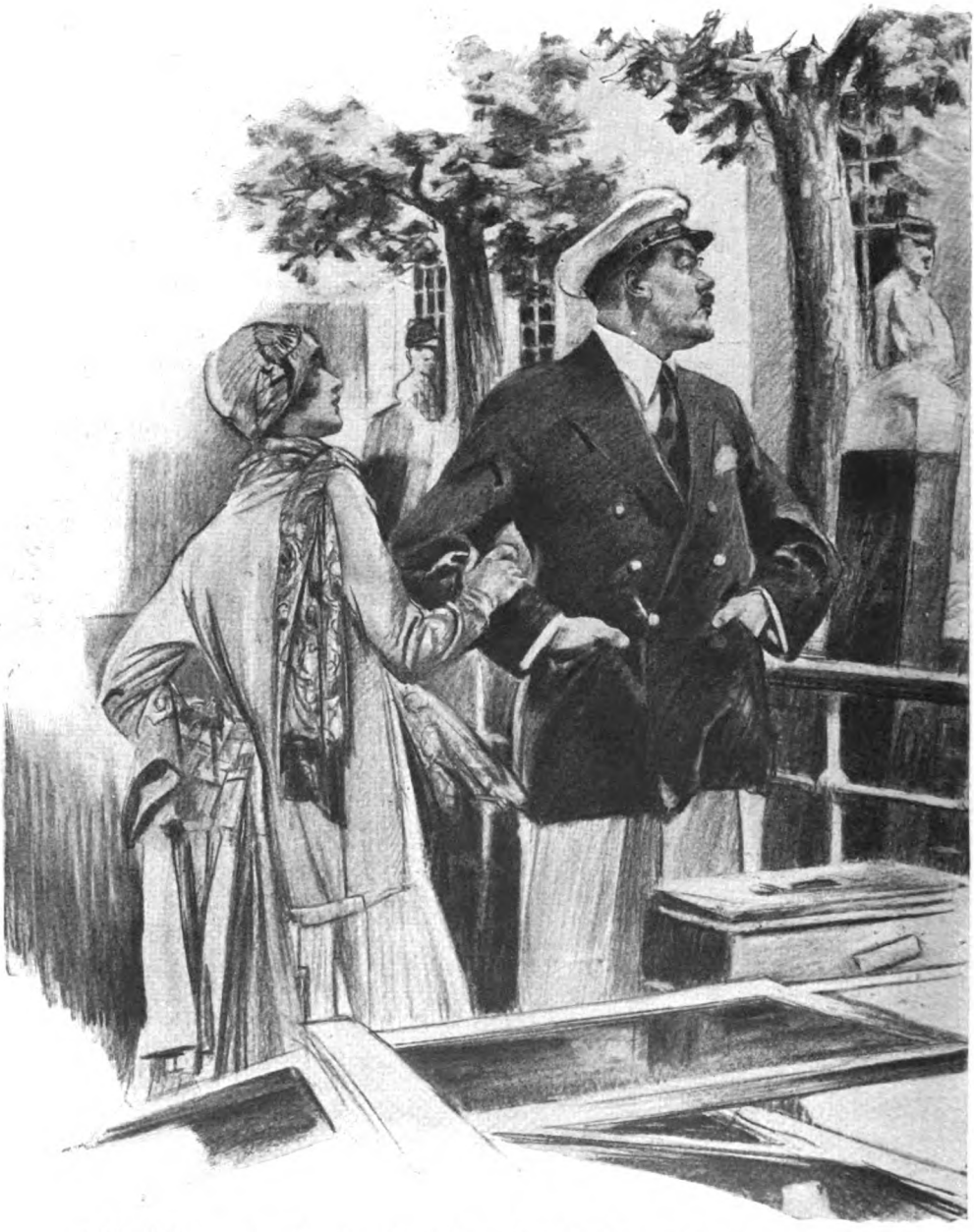
"I suppose you thought it would be a lesson to me?"

"Well, I did," said Jim, shortly, intimidated by the formidableness of her tone, and wishing to Heaven he had never had the notion of teaching her a lesson.

" Well, it *will* be a lesson to me. But not the lesson you think. I'll never trust you again. You aren't a man and you aren't a husband. You're a horrible brute. That was what I wanted to say to you, and I'll never forgive you."

She touched the chauffeur in the middle of the back, and motioned to him to return to the yacht.

" Of course," she proceeded, " I'm in your power. You know it, and I admit it fully. I couldn't get away from you, no matter how



" You'd better pay the chauffeur, dearest," said Alice, silkily, for the benefit of the crew.

" Pilot ! " Jim shouted. " Find out how much that fellow wants, will you ? "

much money and pluck I had. I'm fast, simply because I haven't a passport. I shall have to fall in with your wishes, and there's nothing more to be said. So I won't say another word. But I must say this——" She went on talking until the car was once again alongside the yacht.

" The whole thing is perfectly silly. It's infantile," Jim muttered.

" You may think so. But I don't," said Alice.

They stepped on to the yacht. The crew got the luggage aboard.

" You'd better pay him, dearest," said Alice, silkily, for the benefit of the crew.

" Pilot ! " Jim shouted. " Find out how much that fellow wants, will you ? And you pay him, skipper."

"Lock's opening, sir," said the skipper.

"All right. Get her through."

Jim planted himself on the deck, feet wide apart and hands deep in his pockets, a statue of ferocious gloom. Up forward baby Alice II. was pretending to bandage Pete's ankle. And she was absurdly like her mother at the task, though she had never seen her mother bandaging Pete's ankle. The resemblance was wonderful, incredible, very touching. Even while they were casting-off the crew gave sidelong glances at the sight and smiled; and as for the engineer, he could scarcely bring himself to descend into the engine-room, so spellbound was he by the group of red-headed Pete and Alice II.

Alice herself smiled.

Only Jim would not smile. He went below and dropped disgustedly on his bunk and glowered at the ceiling, cursing himself and cursing Alice, and resolving to sell the rotten yacht. Then Alice invaded his cabin.

"Oh, lor'!" thought Jim. "More to come!"

"You great silly!" murmured Alice, bending over him and kissing him. "You great silly!" And she kissed him again. "Now kiss me. A good one."

He kissed her. All was light. In an instant of time all was happiness. But in the secrecy of his soul Jim stoutly maintained that you never knew where you were with women. When they seemed to be most serious they really weren't serious at all. And if she hadn't happened to be touched and flattered by the sight of Alice II. imitating her Red Cross work upon Pete——

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 156.

THE first befell the last in days of old,
When foe came down like wolf upon the fold.

1. In French, and, could such thing be pluralized,
Judgings perhaps would here be recognized.
2. A milk-white stag both fast and far he chased,
And red-hot torture cheerfully he faced.
3. Though ever in the South and North, our quest
May surely be located in the West.
4. Here from the load of life released I lie:
Ask not my name: but take my curse, and die.
5. Crown, sceptre, sword of state, and more there are:
And all can be exchanged for one cigar.
6. A bird with sweet may be to man applied.
Our part of it in poet is descried.
7. Big birds bereft of head perhaps you may
Discover nearly fifty miles away.
8. Here French and English meet; do not forget,
When they are joined, where French and English met.
9. Behead the names of famous pioneer:
Then let the one that is not right appear.
10. Father of one who wed a cruel wife,
And found that harness failed to save his life.
11. The mighty lunar owl, before all eyes,
From Holy Well portentously shall rise.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 156 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on July 10th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 155.

(*The Third of the Series.*)

THUS on the light fantastic toe
Do rustic lads and lasses go.

1. Saintly, a swimmer of the seas.
2. A hash or medley, if you please.
3. Seizing on what is not your own.
4. Suggesting tools in age of stone.
5. Go hither for Society.
6. Belonging to a river bank.
7. In '28 will victor be
If in the first and fleetest rank.

KING COLE.

1. C	ha	D
2. O	llapodrid	A
3. U	surpatio	N
4. N	eolithi	C
5. T	ahit	I
6. R	lparia	N
7. Y	earlin	G

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

"WHAT SHALL I BE ?"
The Choice of a Career

The object of these articles is to help boys and their parents to settle the question, "What shall I be?" Boys are often attracted by the external appearance of a profession and adopt it without any notion of its duties and requirements. Not seldom they are disappointed. The mental response to one's work is all-important, for unless one likes his job he is unlikely to excel, and he is certain to be unhappy in it. He can of course change, but too frequent changes are disturbing factors in achieving a career.

These contributions, written by men who have won distinction in their various callings, are selections from a book compiled by

J. A. R. CAIRNS

(the well-known Metropolitan Magistrate),

and dedicated to H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES. The book, published by Messrs. J. W. Arrowsmith (London), Ltd., will appear shortly.

VII.

MEDICINE and SURGERY.

By

ONE OF THE MOST EMINENT PHYSICIANS OF THE DAY.

MEDICINE as a career in life possesses attractions which are offered by no other profession. It is important, however, that those attractions should specially appeal to those who are selecting this profession for their life's work, for Medicine is a jealous mistress, and demands a whole-hearted and lifelong devotion from its devotees.

Those who select Medicine for their career should have the wish "to be a doctor" firmly implanted, and then success is almost assured from the start.

The Medical Practitioner will find his life

full of interest from the mere fact that he is constantly brought closely into touch with the lives of all classes of humanity, and often at times when the human feelings are most sorely tried. The sympathetic doctor is bound to become a close student of human nature and life in all its aspects of joy and sorrow.

Medicine should not be selected as a career on account of its financial attractions, for few doctors amass large fortunes.

On the other hand, the career of Medicine assures a moderate financial reward, and no doctor need suffer financial hardships provided that he avails himself of the numerous opportunities offered in the many branches of his profession. He can be certain of a comfortable livelihood, and this may be more safely reckoned upon than in the other great professions.

The Medical Profession, unlike most other professions, is by no means overcrowded, and sometimes there is some difficulty in finding suitable candidates for appointments with considerable financial and professional attractions. This is the case especially with appointments in some of the public medical services and in various parts of the Empire abroad.

MODERN Medicine has become an Applied Science, and it offers innumerable opportunities for scientific work and research. The keen student of Science, whether of Chemistry, Physics, or Biology, need never fear taking up the profession of Medicine, for he will find that his scientific knowledge gives him a grasp of many of the great problems of the Medicine of to-day. He will find in the practice of Medicine numerous opportunities of applying those principles of pure Science which are doing so much to make Medicine an exact Science.

A scientific training such as is ensured by those taking a science degree is by no means wasted time as a preliminary to the medical career. The student who has had a good grounding in Science will find the study of Medicine fascinating and easy, and he will commence his career with a considerable advantage over his fellows who have been less fortunate in this respect.

The opportunities offered to the Medical Practitioner on completion of his career are innumerable. Private practice, whether consulting or general, may be aspired to. Appointments in the public services, such as those of Public Health, the Army, Navy, or Air Forces, are attainable without difficulty. If travel abroad is desired, no difficulty is experienced in obtaining appointments in the Indian or Colonial Medical Services, or in the numerous industrial concerns in the many parts of the Empire.

In every human enterprise the help of the Medical Practitioner is needed, and even a Polar expedition is incomplete without one or more doctors on its staff.

THE practice of Medicine provides a constant fascination to every lover of his profession, for every case of illness presents special features of interest in its origin, development, diagnosis, and treatment.

Just as no two individuals are exactly alike, so it certainly may be said that every case of disease presents individual peculiarities which in some respects make it different from any previous case. This aspect of Medicine prevents its practice from ever becoming tedious or boring to the keen practitioner, for he is constantly discovering new aspects of disease in every case which he carefully watches and studies.

"What are the qualifications necessary for the boy who desires to enter the Medical Profession?"

In the first place a preliminary general education of adequate standard is required before registration as a medical student. In other words, one of the Matriculation Examinations of the various Universities must be passed, or an equivalent examination such as is laid down by the regulations.

In addition, the latest regulations require that students who pass a preliminary examination in Arts in January 1923, or later, must also pass a pre-medical examination in Chemistry or Physics before registration by the General Medical Council.

No student can be registered until he is seventeen years of age, or be admitted to the Final Examinations until he is twenty-one years of age and has completed the prescribed course of study. After registration the course of medical study can be commenced at any of the recognized Medical Schools. The many Universities in the United Kingdom provide an ample choice, and in London the hospitals with attached Medical Schools may be selected from.

THE Medical Curriculum extends over a period of five years, but a student who completes it within six years may be said to have done well.

In cases of students who have passed the required Preliminary Examination in Arts before January, 1923, the first year will be devoted to the study of Chemistry, Physics,

and Biology, and the requisite examinations must be passed if this has not already been done.

In the case of students who have passed the Preliminary Examination in Arts in January, 1925, or later, and the pre-Medical Examination in Chemistry or Physics, or in the case of University Students who have passed the First Examination in Chemistry, Physics, or Biology, the succeeding two years are devoted to the study of Anatomy, Physiology, and Pharmacology.

The final three years are devoted to the study of Pathology, Bacteriology, Medicine (including Forensic Medicine and Public Health), Surgery, Midwifery, and Gynæcology. A great part of the time of the final three years is spent in Clinical Study in the hospital wards.

A great part of the time of the final three years is spent in Clinical Study in the hospital wards.

On account of the special facilities for Clinical Study provided by the numerous large hospitals in London, many students after completing their preliminary medical studies elsewhere come to London for the final three years' work. This practice has become almost universal in the case of Oxford and Cambridge medical students.

It goes without saying that the requisite examinations must be passed on completion of each stage of the curriculum before the next stage can be embarked upon.

Just as there is an ample choice of Medical Schools, so there are numerous qualifying Medical Diplomas and Degrees for the students to select from. The General Medical Council supervises the courses of studies and examinations for the various qualifying examinations and ensures their being of a requisite standard. There is not in this country a uniform State Medical Examination.

Where a student, after qualification, desires higher degrees, these are provided by the—

M.D. degrees of the various Universities.
By the Fellowship of the Colleges of Surgeons.
By the Membership and Fellowship of the Colleges of Physicians.
By the Diplomas in Public Health, Tropical Medicine, and other special branches of Medicine and Surgery.

The long period of five to six years required by the curriculum is of itself an important financial consideration. The actual cost of the fees for the entire Medical Curriculum varies according to the Medical School or University selected. An average figure for the London Medical Schools would be two hundred pounds.

The keen, hard-working student who has the ambition to become a doctor should not be deterred by the apparent expense of his prospective course of study. Numerous scholarships are available at the various Medical Schools and Universities which are

within the grasp of the keen and determined worker.

After obtaining a medical qualification it is necessary for the successful student to have his name placed on the Register of the General Medical Council without delay. The privileges of the Medical Profession are only afforded to those who are on the Medical Register.

After becoming qualified and registered a student will be wise to hold resident hospital appointments, and so gain valuable practical experience in those branches of the profession in which he intends to practise. Whenever possible, at least a year should be spent in post-graduate study of this kind immediately after qualifying. The experience and confidence gained by holding resident hospital appointments is of the utmost value, and the time spent will be repaid a hundredfold.

THE registered Medical Practitioner, *ipso facto*, receives a high social status in the community, and his professional position is one which ensures respect and public esteem.

The remuneration varies according to the branch of practice embarked upon.

The General Practitioner will command an income depending on the type of practice which he selects.

In the poorer districts of the Metropolis and great cities the price of purchase of a practice may not be high, and the income accruing may range from five hundred pounds to two thousand pounds or three thousand pounds per annum; but the work is very hard, and there are few social amenities to compensate for the unceasing calls upon him under very trying conditions.

In country districts the work is hard, and a great amount of travelling is required. The maximum income varies according to the type of practice, but usually the country doctor must rest content with an income of from five hundred pounds to one thousand pounds per annum. Some compensation for the strenuous work may be derived from the pleasures of a country life.

In London and the large towns the General Practitioner may command an income of anything from five hundred pounds to five thousand pounds per annum, according to the type of practice. It must be borne in mind, however, that the purchasing price of a rich practice is proportionately high.

In consulting practice the successful Physician may command an income of anything up to ten thousand pounds per annum; very few exceed this figure.

Just as in the case of Barristers, the successful men are in the minority, and a great number of Consulting Physicians find some difficulty in meeting the heavy expenses entailed by their position.

The Consulting Surgeon belongs to the most highly remunerated class of the Medical Profession. The fees received for surgical operations in private practice are such that a successful Consulting Surgeon may earn an income of from ten thousand pounds to fifty thousand pounds per annum. It must be remembered, however, that, as in the case of Physicians, by no means all Consulting Surgeons are successful from the financial point of view.

There are many who think that the fees for Consulting Medical and Surgical Practice are disproportionate. It has been claimed, however, that the Surgical fees should not be lowered, but the Medical fees increased.

In the public services the remuneration for professional work in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Colonial Services corresponds approximately to those in similar positions in the combatant and civil services. The work is interesting, and perhaps not so exacting as that of general practice.

After twenty years' successful service a pension of from five hundred pounds to eight hundred pounds per annum is to be expected, and the retired officer may now embark on a medical practice of his choice.

Very often, however, the absence of constant clinical work during his official service deters a man from embarking on clinical practice, and he prefers some less remunerative administrative post, though these are difficult to obtain.

In the Public Health Service there is a keen competition for appointments, and this is somewhat remarkable, since the remuneration is very inadequate for the high qualifications demanded and for the inestimable benefit to the public accruing from the work of the skilled expert in Hygiene. A Medical Practitioner with high special qualifications in Public Health will usually obtain as his first appointment a post of value about six hundred pounds per annum. The Medical Office of Health appointments of large towns and districts usually possess remuneration of from eight hundred pounds to twelve hundred pounds a year, though in a few exceptional cases this figure is exceeded. In the case of Public Health appointments not directly under Government Departments the provision of a pension comes from a contribution on the salary of the Medical Officer.

The majority of medical men after qualification take up the career of General Medical Practitioner. It is this great group of the Medical Profession who bear the burden and

heat of the day, and it is they who are brought into most intimate contact with the sick and suffering of the Empire.

It has often been said, and I think with great truth, that the General Medical Practitioner of this country has nobly upheld the highest traditions of the Medical Profession, and his professional skill and high character form an example to the Medical Practitioners of the world.

VIII.

JOURNALISM.

By

SIR ROBERT LYNN, M.P.,

Editor "Northern Whig," Belfast.

"I WANT to become a journalist." This phrase must be familiar to most newspaper editors. And those who look back on their own early struggles are ever ready to lend a helping hand to the promising youth who is ready to scorn delights and spend laborious days or nights as the case may be. It is safe to say that the percentage of those who visit the editorial sanctum full of enthusiasm for Journalism and who ever evolve as journalists is small. Most of them have not the faintest idea of the qualifications necessary, and in the majority of cases they want to start at the top. On the strength of the fact that he has contributed an article to his school magazine or has strung together two dozen lines of doggerel you will find a boy who is ready to make his first flight from the Leader Writers' Room. And what a sorry failure the effort generally is! Journalists may, like poets, be born, but they want a terrible lot of making before they reach the perfect stature of journalistic manhood.

Sir Robert Lynn.
Photo: Elliott & Fry.

It is to those who have no objection to going through a rough mill that I want to address myself. For the true journalist there is no other profession which offers the same attractions, but unless one really loves his work, it is a rough and laborious road that has to be traversed. It is important that the youth who is looking to Journalism as a profession should be under no illusions. The whole time is not spent in launching thunderbolts intended to kill politicians and other wicked people. The work should never be dull, but it is uncommonly hard at times.

What prospects does Journalism offer to the ambitious youth who has got the particular gifts necessary for the production of a newspaper? I have no hesitation in saying that, as compared with the other learned professions, it offers many attractions. It is true that only for the favoured few does it offer the monetary advantages of a business career. But money is not the only thing in life that counts, and many a man who could not get an overdraft at the bank is richer in the things that satisfy than the millionaire. Journalists are now able to command decent salaries, and certainly at the top there is not a jostling crowd. The youth who is anxious to amass a huge fortune should, however, look elsewhere than to Journalism.

Assuming that a youth is prepared to share in the pleasant hardships of work that is never-ending, and that he does not desire to hoard up gold or "Bradburys," the question arises as to the training necessary before he can get a firm footing on the journalistic ladder. The mistake is too often made of assuming that the only requisite in a newspaper office is a knowledge of shorthand. One might know more about shorthand than even Pitman himself, and yet not be the slightest use in producing a newspaper. Shorthand is a useful adjunct, but standing

alone it will be of very little service. Some of the best journalists I have ever met never could understand shorthand. And yet for some kinds of journalistic work it is indispensable. The majority of journalists who have started at the bottom and worked their way through the different departments employed shorthand, and my advice to the youth who wants to get the widest possible experience in Journalism is to learn shorthand. It is useful in going through life to be able to record the spoken word with ease.

THERE are two ways in which a youth can enter the journalistic profession, but if he is to be a success he must have a sound education. Some editors refuse to take men on their literary staff unless they can display the hall-mark of a University degree. There are different opinions as to which makes the best journalist—the University-trained man or the man who has got all his training in a newspaper office. Lord Northcliffe had a theory that the best way to educate a youth was to put him through a newspaper office for a few years and then send him to a University. As a theory it was excellent, but it is not every boy who could afford to pay for the experiment. It is useless for a youth who has not a good all-round education to hope for success in Journalism.

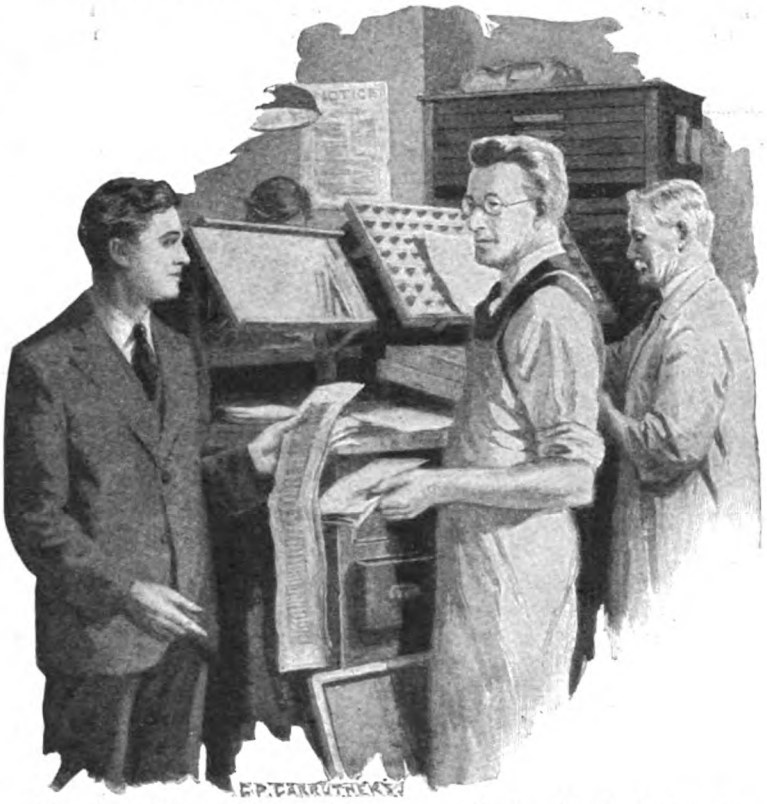
A careful perusal of a newspaper for, say, a week will reveal the wide range of subjects with which a modern newspaper is called upon to deal. The journalist is unable to hide his ignorance, for if he tries to deal with subjects he does not understand he will soon be found out, if not by the general public, then by the experts. What a terror the expert is to the young and inexperienced journalist! It is impossible to prescribe a curriculum for the aspiring journalist. His reading should be as wide as possible. Foreign languages are valuable, and they should not be neglected; but the English language, so rich in the best that literature has produced, calls for the closest study. There is not a single department of the English language that does not call for the attention of the youth who wishes to become a successful journalist. His earliest task in all probability will be the law courts, and if he knows something of the framework, history, and evolution of our legal system he will find his work much more interesting. Indeed, the whole social structure presents a never-failing source of interest to the thoughtful student. Politics loom large in the life of the average journalist, and a close knowledge of the history of our own politics is essential to any journalist who wishes to climb the ladder. I do not suggest that the young journalist should pore over the pages of Hansard for years, but he should at least have a nodding acquaintance with all the outstanding figures in the life of the nation since we emerged from the tribal stage.

It is said that we are an insular people, but in these days, when the world has become so small, there is little hope for promotion in Journalism if there is not a general knowledge of the history and the conditions of life in all other civilized countries. Every country in the world contributes its quota to the material which goes to make up a daily newspaper. To put it in a nutshell, no one should aim at being a journalist unless his mind is well stored with general knowledge and he has the aptitude for assimilating knowledge every day of his life. I believe that a newspaper office is the finest University in the world for the individual who has acquired the habits of the diligent student.

I said there were two ways by which a youth could enter the profession. If he is particularly gifted he may start his apprenticeship in a daily newspaper office. His first term is not specially exhilarating to the spirited youth who begins with the idea that he was born to set the world right. It may be that he does nothing more exciting than open telegrams and letters. The idea of "fagging" may be irksome at the time, but in after years one realizes the advantage of seeing everything from the beginning. Little by little the youth emerges, and it largely depends on himself what class of work he has to do.

The second entrance is through the office of the country weekly. I have a great regard for the country weeklies, which have for so long supplied a useful feature in the national life. They are produced in a more leisurely fashion than the big dailies. They have not the same army of experts at their command, and they offer wonderful opportunities for the well-educated youth. There is scarcely a phase in parochial life with which he is not brought into contact. He sees life free from much of the tinsel that is observable in our large cities. I always feel that the boy who starts in a country newspaper office has an advantage over his city cousin. He has certainly opportunities for displaying any talent he has, since he may have to take a hand in describing anything from poultry rearing to the beauties of Greek poetry. Only those who have had the experience can realize the diversified character of the work which falls to the lot of a country journalist. It is not all a picnic. But generally when it is hard it is exciting. The journalist who has a wide knowledge of a province makes the best man when the time comes for tackling work on the large morning or evening newspaper.

He knows the prominent men and the particular weight they carry, and he saves his newspaper from making those howlers which are inseparable from lack of local knowledge. The local friendships he makes are invaluable. One of the reasons why Delane of *The Times* was such a great success was his facilities for having friends everywhere. Friends scattered over the country are a great source of strength and information, and my advice to young journalists is to make friends everywhere.



The idea of "fagging" may be irksome at the time, but in after years one realizes the advantage of seeing everything from the beginning.

Whether a youth enters the profession through the city or through the country, there is only one sure way to success, and that is by hard work. Brilliant spurts will not succeed in carrying anyone to the front line. Brilliance is commendable, but what is wanted is steady brilliance. You cannot offer your reader any excuse for being dull. If you did he would not accept it. A high level is expected all the year round, and unless you can keep up to it you must be written down as a failure. There is no profession where one has to depend so much on merit. Cook's son and duke's son meet on a perfect equality in the democratic domain of Journalism, and it is the one who possesses the true journalistic qualities who must rule.

No matter how insignificant the task which is allotted to the journalist, he should discharge it as faithfully as if it were something big and out of the ordinary. He should cultivate the habit of doing everything thoroughly. It may only be a three-line paragraph, but it should be written with as much care as if it were a leading article which might overthrow a Government. "Thorough" should be the motto of every young journalist. Next to thoroughness I would put accuracy. The injunction of the apostle to prove all things should be laid to heart. A little care would obviate most of the inaccuracies that find their way into print. The accurate journalist who never lets his editor down is a treasure, and he is highly valued. Closely associated with accuracy is the gift of getting news. Some men have a particular faculty for getting exclusive information. Here again the most painstaking care must be taken, but three-fourths of the secret is to be found in the capacity for taking pains. Never betray a confidence. Every journalist from the youngest to the oldest is made the recipient of confidences, and it should always be a point of honour to keep them, even when doing so means a personal loss. It is important, however, to be wary of the public man who offers to tell something in confidence which you would find without his help. It often happens that a journalist is prevented from publishing a particular piece of news because he has already been told it in confidence, and not a few clever politicians adopt this method with the object of silencing a journalist.

The first few years of training over, the

future lies largely in the hands of the journalist himself. No amount of outside influence can help him if he is not fitted for his position. In the preliminary training he is usually called upon to do all classes of ordinary work. This is all to the good, and fits him for the greater responsibilities that lie ahead. Very often the difficulty is to find young men who will accept responsibilities. For those who are willing and capable the opportunity soon comes. Young journalists, and indeed their seniors, should never forget that their services are to the public in an especial degree. The journalist is the public watchdog. His business is to observe public affairs with a watchful but a single eye. In his work he must exercise the scrupulous fairness of a judge and in no circumstances must he allow personal feelings to warp his judgment. The journalist who is of any account must make friends and enemies, but he must be careful not to attach undue importance to praise, and certainly not to be turned aside from doing his duty by even the most virulent abuse. Above all things, he should never meet vulgar personalities with vulgar personalities. Personalities indicate the small mind, and they never enhance those who indulge in them with the thinking public. After all, facts, and facts only, count. A man may differ from one in politics or religion and still be an honest, intelligent man. It is wrong to suppose that every opponent is a knave or a fool. Allowance should always be made for the other man's point of view. The journalist who neglects to do this is sure to prove a failure. There is not much sympathy nowadays for the frame of mind of the old Scottish woman who declared: "There are only two Christians in the parish—the meenister and mysel', and I hae ma doots about the meenister."

HONESTY must be the dominant feature in the character of the journalist who wishes to gain the confidence of his readers. Honesty is more important than cleverness, because it is lasting. If personal fads or personal prejudices are ever allowed to bulk largely in a newspaper they must in time bring about its downfall. History is full of recorded failures of newspapers established to give vent to the opinions of some faddist. The public look to a newspaper to place all the affairs of life before it without undue favouritism, and the newspaper that neglects this primary duty is bound to wither and decay. A journalist should be not only honest but also independent. It is not always easy. Sometimes in the exercise of independence one hurts the feelings of a friend who does not want to hear the truth, but even the loss of friends should never be allowed to stand between oneself and duty. Neither smiles nor frowns should be allowed to deflect the journalist's judgment. It is only by pursuing an honest, fearless, independent policy that a journalist can maintain the highest traditions of his profession and at the same time render the greatest service to the public.

IX.

The ARMY.

Authenticated and Approved by

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR.

IT may at the outset quite frankly be said that the Army must be a career of choice; a square peg in a round hole is nowhere more ill at ease than in the Army. The object of this article is to give a somewhat more informed idea of what is involved in the choice of the Army as a career than is generally current, and to show that in some respects the peg may be less square or the hole less round than may at first sight be anticipated.

In the choice of a career, as in so many other things, it frequently saves time and trouble to know the worst at the beginning, and therefore it is not inappropriate to state at the outset the disadvantages of an officer's life.

In the first place, if anyone desires large financial rewards he had better avoid not only the Army but all other Government service. On the other hand, it is only right to say that, though he is not likely to make money, he is equally unlikely to lose it.

In the second place, if the would-be

candidate for His Majesty's Commission has a rooted dislike to all forms of discipline—by this is not meant the normal human aversion that arises occasionally in every manly breast from doing what we don't want to do, but a congenital and extreme individualism that impels one to refrain from doing even what one may want to simply on the ground that one has been told to do it—then such a candidate had probably better refrain from the Army, even though life in the Army may be the one hope for his immortal soul.

Thirdly, if the young man has an aversion to travelling, if he likes to stay in one place gathering moss, and is immune from the "wanderlust" microbe, then the Army is no place for him.

It is hoped that by this time the undesirable candidate has been thoroughly deterred from all thoughts of a military career, and we may therefore turn to the other side of the picture.

As has been said, the Army is not a money-making profession, but it is a profession which gives the officer an adequate and not ungenerous salary in return for the services he renders. The details of remuneration are accessible to everyone. Broadly speaking, including allowances (or the value of issues in kind), they range from about two hundred and sixty-nine pounds for an unmarried Second-Lieutenant; three hundred and six pounds for a Lieutenant (three hundred and fifty-seven pounds after seven years' service); four hundred and forty-seven pounds for a Captain (five hundred and thirty-two pounds after fifteen years' service); six hundred and fifty-five pounds for a Major; to one thousand one hundred and thirty-nine pounds for a Lieutenant-Colonel, with higher rates for allowances in every case for those married officers who are thirty years of age or over. It must also be realized that a pension is assured in the event of retirement after only fifteen years' service.

There is, however, one consideration that is too frequently lost sight of. Many a young officer is living on his pay from the moment he joins the Army, *i.e.*, at the age of nineteen he becomes self-supporting. A candidate for most of the other professions either has to spend three or four years at a University, where, instead of earning three hundred pounds a year, he costs probably four hundred pounds, and at the end of it is lucky if he can start by earning what his brother in the Army has already been earning for four years, or he has to spend an equal or greater number of years serving some form of apprenticeship for his profession, during which he has to be supported in whole or in part by his parents. The Army is undoubtedly the cheapest profession from the parental point of view that exists to-day.

Sir L. Worthington-Evans, Bart.,
Secretary of State for War.
Photo: Elliott & Fry.

The critic will, of course, point out that as a matter of fact no officer can live on his pay in an expensive regiment. That, of course, is perfectly true; the answer is that in the first place he need not join an expensive regiment, and in the second place an expensive life is expensive anywhere. One can get nothing for nothing in this world, but it is probable that one can get more for sixpence in the Army than one can in civil life.

As regards the cost of Sandhurst or Woolwich, parents must remember that this cost compares very favourably with the cost of their sons continuing at a Public School or going to a University. Moreover, the scale of fees is very much smaller when the boy's father is, or was, an officer in any arm of the Service, or a private, airman, or seaman. The fees range from twenty pounds for the sons of an officer, sailor, marine, soldier, or airman who has died whilst on full pay, half pay, or pension, and whose family has been left in pecuniary distress, to one hundred and five pounds for the son of a General, Admiral, or Air-Chief-Marshal, and two hundred pounds for the son of a private gentleman. King's Cadets are admitted free and are granted an educational allowance of forty pounds a year between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. These King's Cadets are appointed from sons of officers of the Navy, Army, and Air Force, and permanent military forces of the Overseas Dominions and Colonies, who have fallen in action or died of wounds or of disease contracted on service abroad and have left their families in reduced circumstances.

Prize Cadetships, which are given to those who pass in highest on the Entrance Examination, entitle the holder to a reduction of the fee from two hundred pounds to one hundred and five pounds a year, and also a reduction of the usual charges for

uniform and books, which normally amount to ninety pounds at Woolwich and seventy pounds at Sandhurst.

There are also scholarships available for officers appointed to commissions to the Regular Army from Woolwich and Sandhurst. These awards were instituted by the Army Council in 1924, when the grant each half-year of eleven scholarships of the annual value of fifty pounds, tenable for five years, was sanctioned.

Of these scholarships three go to cadets from Woolwich, six to cadets from Sandhurst, and two to University candidates. The recipients from Woolwich and Sandhurst are the cadets who are awarded the Sword of Honour, those who pass out with the highest marks, and the next most deserving on grounds of all-round efficiency. Moreover, a cadet who passes out of Woolwich and obtains a commission in the Royal Engineers enjoys a still further opportunity of completing his academic education at the expense of the State. After being gazetted, he is given a post-graduate course at the School of Military Engineering at Chatham and at Cambridge University for a period of nearly three years, the fees at the University being borne by Army funds.

Enough has been said on the inevitable question of money. To sum up, it may truthfully be said that no one who is determined to hold His Majesty's Commission need in these days be prevented from so doing because he has no private means, although for an officer to live on his pay during his first three years' service undoubtedly requires the exercise of rigid economy and some degree of self-denial. If his parents can give him a small allowance, say fifty or a hundred pounds a year, it will certainly enable him to have a more pleasant life.

THE greatest attraction of the Army is probably that for a young man not too well endowed with this world's goods it provides an unrivalled opportunity for travelling, adventure, and sport. In the majority of professions the means and opportunity of seeing the world come too late, if at all. Life is short and the world is wide. He who would know the cities and races of men and would see strange lands under strange skies should do so young. To the young they can give so much more in the way of experience and enjoyment than to the weary globe-trotter on retirement, who probably does not go to the places he always wanted to see because his health won't stand the heat or the cold, or because his imaginative faculties have atrophied, or because, worst of all, he fears that they haven't atrophied, and that he will merely add to his store of regrets for what he has missed in life. Sport in all its various forms is easily accessible to the young officer. Apart from the usual facilities for regimental cricket, football, etc., arrangements are made whereby he can use Army horses for hunting, and if he is in the Cavalry or Artillery for polo, at an extraordinarily low figure. There are few stations abroad where he cannot get good shooting, including big-game shooting if he chooses to utilize his leave in this way. India, of course, is an inexhaustible happy hunting-ground for the sportsman.

An idea is apt to prevail that life in the Army is limited in its interests and affords little scope for the man for whom the somewhat restricted activities of regimental life are not sufficient. In point of fact nothing is farther from the truth. The Army is a microcosm, and there is practically no activity of civil life which does not possess to some degree its counterpart in the Army. If an officer is interested in business administration the "Q" staff affords him an ample opportunity of developing his bent. If he wishes to study the actions and reactions of world politics, he has better opportunities for so doing as an officer of the General Staff than in almost any other profession. Encouragement and facilities are given to the officer to study modern languages, and awards are made to those who qualify as interpreters. Two officers annually are seconded to Japan for three years to study the Japanese language, and one officer a year to China to learn Chinese. While so seconded these officers receive the full pay of their rank plus a special consolidated allowance. If an officer wishes to specialize in various branches of engineering work or scientific research a path is open to him, and he is given every opportunity to develop his natural talents in the appropriate direction. The increasing application of scientific and mechanical resources to the theory and practice of war is providing more and more opportunities for the technical man.

An attempt has been made to give some idea of the advantages of the Army as a career, and it only remains in conclusion to give a brief description of the various methods of obtaining a commission. Full details on this matter can always be obtained by reference to the War Office.

The normal method of obtaining a commission is by passing through either the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, or the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. The former establishment provides for candidates for the Cavalry, Infantry, Royal Army Service Corps, and Royal Tank Corps; the latter for those who wish to enter the Royal Artillery, the Royal Engineers, or the Royal

Sport in all its various forms is easily accessible to the young officer.

Corps of Signals. Commissions may also be obtained through recognized Universities to the extent of one hundred candidates a year. The minimum academic qualification required of a University candidate is a Pass Degree; a University Degree entitles to seniority, the candidates being given an antedate, and the higher the degree the greater the antedate. The seniority lost through entering the Army at a later age than the Sandhurst or Woolwich Cadet can thus be largely discounted by a good degree.

Commissions in the Regular Army may also be obtained through the commissioned ranks of the Territorial Army and the Supplementary Reserve, and also through the Royal Military College, Kingston, Canada, and various overseas Universities, while it is open to men serving in the ranks to be selected for a Cadet Course at the Royal Military College with a view to being commissioned subsequently in the Cavalry, Infantry, Tank Corps, or Royal Army Service Corps.

The Hostage

By

PERCEVAL GIBBON

ILLUSTRATED BY
S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

THE breakfast table was set in the bay of the wide window that overlooked the green spaces of the Park, with its trees and the shine of the morning sunlight upon the Serpentine in the distance. There was a gentle stir of traffic upon the parkside road; a benign sun was over all, and the sum of the effect was that of a gay tranquillity, of a civilization achieved, elaborated, and secure. Charters, who had breakfasted late, sat yet at his table, his unopened letters on the cloth before him, his crumpled newspapers on the floor beside his chair, the first cigarette of the day between his lips; he gazed upon it all and saw that it was good.

"'Let's go out and kill something!'" he quoted in a murmur, for he was alone. He half-smiled at the allusion, for, as a matter of fact, he wasn't that kind of Englishman at all. He was a tall man in the early thirties, slender and comely without being pretty; and among those many foreigners he had known there were some who had marked, behind the perfect conventionality of his presence and address—the uniform which men of his race and his class wear upon their souls—the glimmer of an individuality humorous and tolerant. He had begun life in the Diplomatic Service; had served there till the call of the war summoned him irresistibly from the Embassy in St. Petersburg to a commission in the Guards. A Bavarian street-sweeper, hanging as far as he dared behind the attack, had found an old gentleman, with the insignia of a colonel upon him, lying wounded in a shell-crater, and had dutifully kicked him to death. And thereby Temporary Captain Charters became Sir Phillip Charters, Baronet, and a very wealthy man. He had never been a poor one, so the wealth was not thrown away. A man must be used to money if he is to use it decently and without noise; for noisy wealth is always noisome.

And thus he sat, blandly appreciating the balm of the day, when the door opened quietly, and the butler, shabby in his morning pantry clothes, stood at his side.

"Count Alexieff, Sir Phillip," announced the butler. "His Excellency asked me to find out if you were alone, and, if so, could 'e 'ave a few minutes of your time?"

Charters turned the chill eye of discipline upon him.

"You needn't announce the Count like that when I am alone," he said, brusquely. "You can always send him up—I mean, show him up. Do so now."

"Yes, Sir Phillip."

The butler retired and Charters lit another cigarette, yawned luxuriously, bent and touched his toes, and strolled to the empty grate, where he straddled, in the attitude of one who warms himself, while he waited for his visitor. He looked at his wrist-watch; it was twenty minutes past ten.

"Doesn't he ever go to bed?" he mused.

The butler opened the door for the visitor and closed it noiselessly behind him; at first sight, he was plainly the kind of man who is not accustomed to open and close doors for himself. He marched—not merely walked—across the room to take the hand which Charters advanced to offer him, with his polite armoury of hat, gloves, and cane artistically composed in the hold of his left hand. They were cousins; though he was twenty years older than Charters, their mothers were sisters. He was as tall as the younger man, and the maturity of his years had not spoiled the lean length of his figure. The Count Alexieff—Boris for short—had been a high official in the Foreign Ministry in St. Petersburg; had been a strong cog in the gears of "secret diplomacy," till the system for which he stood and of which he was a part had been stamped to death in the blood-and-mud porridge of the revolution. His country house had been

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looted and burned while he was yet in the capital; his sister, his daughter Sonia, his retainers had been part of that holocaust. Agencies, native and foreign, who were aware that the terrible knowledge of unadmitted treaties and understandings, whereof the written records had vanished in the smoke of the burning, were filed in the archives of his memory, had contrived to smuggle him across the frontier of Finland, and so to the bland languid hospitality of England and the careless large bounty of his cousin, Charters.

For the rest, he had the beauty of silver-white hair, dark eyebrows, a small curved moustache with only the beginnings of a grizzle in it, and a gay trifle of an Imperial. His high face, trained and inured to the sense and the custom of privilege, had yet its mask; yet Charters, shaking hands with him, noticed crevices in that armour.

"Hullo, Boris, old man!" he greeted the Count. "Early for you, isn't it? Come to stick me for a breakfast—or what?" The Count did not answer; he stood, not relinquishing the hand which Charters had given him, and that thing which Charters had noticed, as something desperate yet nameless, still shone through his assumption of imperturbability.

He had not answered Charters's greeting.

"I say!" said Charters. "Anything wrong, old chap? Because, you know——"

He was thinking, involuntarily and quite readily, of his all-powerful cheque. And the tall elderly Count, uncannily, saw that he was.

"No!" he said, strongly. Their English mothers had bequeathed them the same brand of English. "Let's sit down. See if you can give me an idea. I've got beastly news!"

THERE were big leather arm-chairs to each side of the hearth. They faced one another across the width of the rug before the cushioned club-fender. The Count sat back in his chair, exhaled his breath loudly, like a man finding rest after a muscle-and-nerve-taxing strain. He put the tips of his fingers together and crossed his knees. He might have been a handsome don kindly admonishing an undergraduate; but Charters, sitting upright opposite to him, was watching the strain with which he kept the handsome calm of his face. There was silence.

"Well?" said Charters at last. "It's your play, Boris. What's the beastly news?"

The Count stared at him with a sort of blankness. For some seconds again he did not answer. Then:—

"Sonia!" he said, and ceased.

It was the name of his daughter, his one child, who had vanished in the *jacquerie* that had devoured his ancestral house, his sister, and his old servants. And in Russia there are servants who can be more than brothers.

Charters half-rose, then sat back again.

"Boris!" he said. "What d'you mean? What are you talking about? Pull yourself together, old man; let's hear what it's all about! Poor Sonia——"

He stopped, for Count Alexieff had jerked out of his attitude of composure. He raised his right hand and shook a long white forefinger at Charters.

"I escaped," he said. It was a cry; his voice cracked while he spoke it. "I escaped from that hell, and she has been there all the time." His fine drilled face had gone to pieces, and for the while he was merely human. "All the time!" he repeated, in a sort of gabble. "My little Sonia—alone with those wild beasts—with those—with those defilers, those bestial—and I escaped!"

He stopped, for Charters had risen to his feet and stood over him.

"Shut up!" said Charters. "What's the matter with you? Sonia—we all know what happened to Sonia. She was"—he hesitated on the word—"she's dead!" He paused, watching his man. "Would you like a glass of brandy?" he inquired.

The other dragged himself to an upright sitting position in his huge chair. He visibly "pulled himself together." His strong, nobly-schooled features fell back into their place. He frowned briefly as he mastered himself and then relaxed.

"Sorry!" he said.

Charters, watching him closely, also relaxed. "All right, of course," he answered, and sat down again. "That's absolutely all right, old fellow. But—er—you mentioned—Sonia?"

The Count had governed himself. He was now sitting forward on the edge of his great chair and looking into the empty grate as one might have stared into an image-treasury of glowing coals if glowing coals had been there. He nodded without looking up.

"She's in Moscow," he said. "She's under arrest. I've seen her handwriting. I've got to go back to Russia. They're going to shoot her if I don't."

He ceased. "Who are?" demanded Charters, after a pause of some seconds. "Don't talk in shorthand, man! Let's hear the whole thing! What are you gibbering about? Little Sonia—why——"

The Count lifted his face and moved a compelling hand.

"She isn't little Sonia any more. She was

twenty-one last year; and so she is a Russian subject. As I am—as I am—God help me!"

His hand covered his eyes. Charters cursed.

"Why don't you talk?" he roared. "What's this lying rot about shooting her?" He paused a second and inspected his cousin carefully. "You can't possibly be drunk," he concluded.

The word was enough. The Count Alexieff stood upright to confront him.

"Drunk—damn you!" he cried. "I'm telling you—I'm trying to tell you—to tell you the most hellish thing—"

Charters hushed him. "Tell me, then," he said. "Tell me—and tell me what I can do for you—and for Sonia! Cough it up, old man; at least I never gave you reason to think I would stop at anything when it came to playing the game! Now, did I, now? Let's hear the worst—and then we can go to work."

Under his lively insistence the Count subsided, and there were a full two minutes during which he lay back in the chair, not sobbing, but shuddering. Charters walked away, took another cigarette, and gave himself a further view of the Park, its calm and its early summer bliss. Here there was peace; there was joy; there were the most kindly and the most magnificent policemen in Europe, whose main tradition it was to render and enforce a courteous amenity between God's funny creatures. And he knew, too—from hearsay—of a famous park in St. Petersburg—since bastardized as Petrograd and threatened with the fouler illegitimacy of "Leningrad"—where screaming women had been initiated into the doctrines of "Communism."

"Communism!" It is the perfect faith, the great ideal which Jesus of Nazareth unleashed upon an unworthy world. But those who possessed the priceless things, and were willing to share them, their ideals and purposes of freedom, peace and knowledge, beauty, courage and faith, had in return little Sonia in a prison, with dirty Death leering at her elbow, making his assignation in an execution cellar. Little Sonia! Charters had seen her last as a long-legged, black-stockinged brat, racing with three boarhounds after a partially-deflated football. She ran like a hare; she ran like the gentle old boarhounds; she laughed as she ran; and now, the might of the Red Revolution, the lightning and eclipse of the would-be world-change, was organized to blot her out.

He paused a second and inspected his cousin carefully. "You can't possibly be drunk," he concluded.

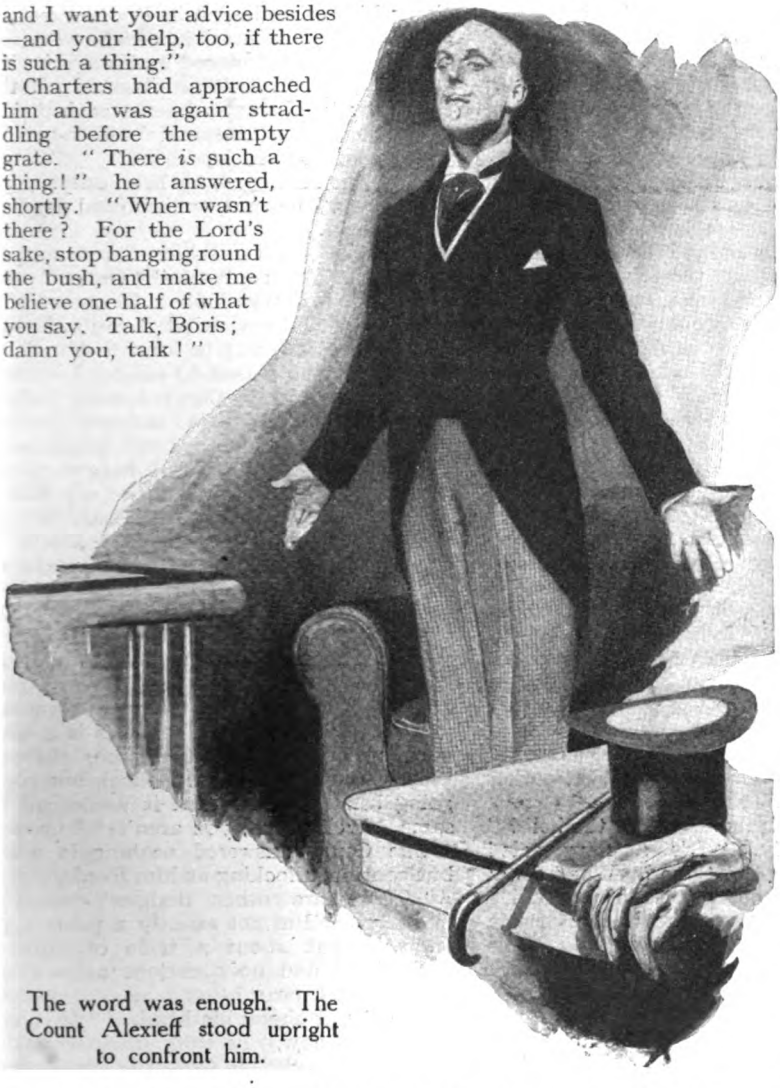
Charters turned. "Better now?" he asked.

The Count was "better now." Already he had sat up.

"Sorry," he said. "Didn't mean to make a fool of myself, Phil. But—never been shaken up like this before. Hope you'll understand!"

Charters grunted. "I'll understand when you've told me," he said. "The main thing—that kid's alive! How d'you know that—if you do know it?"

The Count shook his fine head. "I'll tell you," he said. "I've got to tell you,



The word was enough. The Count Alexieff stood upright to confront him.

and I want your advice besides—and your help, too, if there is such a thing."

Charters had approached him and was again straddling before the empty grate. "There *is* such a thing!" he answered, shortly. "When wasn't there? For the Lord's sake, stop banging round the bush, and make me believe one half of what you say. Talk, Boris; damn you, talk!"

He had not been a diplomat for nothing. His man reacted to the stimulus. Quite leisurely he arose from his chair, and the two tall men were face to face. The Count had recovered his composure; the swift oath had worked on him as it was meant to do.

"I'll tell you," he answered. "See how you like it!" He glared till the glare broke down in a gulp. "Little Sonia—she got out of that house of mine when it was rushed and destroyed—God knows how she did it! There were charred corpses in the ruins; but she was away. And she has been battering about Russia all this time, living Lord knows how—while I—while I—have been cadging on you——"

"Shut up!" growled Charters. "Shut up, will you? How d'you know all this? Who's been bringing you news?"

The Count shrugged; he had still that mannerism. But, in an obvious endeavour to recapture his composure, he reached for the silver cigarette-box, took a cigarette, and lighted it deliberately before he answered. Charters, full of understanding, watched him without speaking.

"A fellow"—the Count spoke suddenly and without preface, looking up as he began with the manner of one resuming a broken sentence—"a fellow called on me yesterday afternoon. Sent in his card, bold as a bailiff! Sort of—er—Foreign Department messenger, he was, between the Soviet headquarters in Moscow and the Russian Delegation here. Carried despatches, with a Diplomatic passport and all that. Showed me his credentials; they were unquestionable in every detail. A little hook-nosed man he was, with a spiky, wax-pointed moustache between the overhang of his parrot-beak and his wolf's mouth, and little black expressionless eyes like—like shoe-buttons. Perfectly civil; civil as—as I suppose the hangman is when he appears to strap some poor devil up for—for his 'absolutely last appearance on any stage'!"

Charters, largely straddled upon the hearth, showed impatience.

"Picturesque!" he said. "Very clever! But I gathered we were talking about Sonia!"

The tall Count spoke that brief Russian word which is the summary of all curses.

" I *am* talking about Sonia ! " he answered. " He had only a verbal message for me ; *they* had not risked themselves in writing. It would have damned them. But he showed me a four-line note from Sonia—unmistakably from Sonia ! My little Sonia ! And his message—and remember ! he was fully accredited—was that I should return to Russia, and place myself and—and my special knowledge at the disposal of the Soviet Republic, or Sonia, who had been found and identified, would be executed as a hostage.

" I said to the little twinkling button-eyed brute : ' Executed ? How ? '

" I spoke, of course, in mere horror. I didn't want an answer. I was just aghast. But that was the trap he had laid for me. He had his answer ready.

" ' Ah ! ' he said, and stood up to go. ' I am merely the messenger and I have delivered my message. You have six weeks, Count, to report yourself in Moscow. If you should fail, it will not be my affair at all. As to the little lady '—the little swine grinned at me and bowed as he made his way towards the door while I was lying paralysed in my chair—' as to the little lady—well, somebody will have an amusing hour or two—but it will not be the little lady ! '

" And he went out before I could gather myself. So now, Phil——"

Charters interrupted. " What the hell ? " he said, coarsely. " It's a fairy tale ! What use are you to them ? What could you tell them, supposing they'd got you ? " He paused ; he had been in the Diplomatic Service himself, in those halcyon days before the war when the profession of diplomacy was the secret and guarded preserve of an endowed caste. As it is now—only then it made no pretence about it.

" Afghanistan ? " he queried, frowning. For Afghanistan is the costly toll-gate of the Russian road to India, the pivotal point of a whole volume of secret treaties. And the Count, at his wide desk in the Foreign Office in St. Petersburg, was the man of all men who would know them to their last detail.

The Count nodded slowly. " That," he admitted ; " and other things. But that chiefly ! "

There was a silence for a while, till Charters, having pondered, broke it.

" Well ! " he said. " You can't do it—and that's that ! "

THE COUNT walked away across the bright room. He paused to look through the great window at the Park, at the drive which bordered it and the easy population which stirred upon it, the testimony to a life and a civilization which were sane and stable. He frowned as though in deep thought ; perhaps he contrasted all that brisk beauty of accepted peace with the dire exaltation, the hell-inspired " will-to-action," of his own doomed land.

He turned his head, his head only.

" I'll go," he said, and turned his head away again.

" Here ! " Behind him Charters spoke sharply. " You can't——"

The Count wheeled. " I know ! " he snapped. " I know what I can't do—and what I can ! I can't be loyal to Russia, for my Russia has ceased to exist. I can't do this and I can't do that : honour forbids ! But honour, and Russia, and you, too, can go to hell, for all I care. Little Sonia sha'n't go too ! I know what will happen as well as you, and better ! I'll make my bargain about Sonia, and when she is safe, I'll lie ! I'll lie as I know how to lie ! I'll lie till they find me out—and then I'll take the consequences. I know what they are ! "

Charters had not moved, save to shift his cigarette from his lips. He spoke now.

" One of those consequences," he said—"whatever the others are—seems pretty plain to me. You're going to prove to them that their system of holding hostages is a sound one. We're agreed, I suppose, that it's vile, it's inhuman, it's diabolical, but you're going back to show that it works, all the same. Well, Boris, you aren't. So now ! "

The Count answered nothing in words, but continued looking at him fixedly.

" There are other dodges," went on Charters. " I'm not exactly a pauper, you know ; what about a trifle of bribery ? Cash down and no questions asked ; you know what I mean ? "

The Count shook his head. " If it were the little fellow," he said, drearily ; " but it isn't ! It's the big ones, the ones with all Russia under their hands to loot and despoil ! There isn't money enough in the world to buy them off. And then they have an affectation of a certain kind of hellish virtue ; among them are many who really believe in their Devil's-devising of a system. Bribery's no good ! "

Charters heard him frowningly. " All the same," he said, and stopped and stood staring at his cousin. " All the same——" he repeated, and paused again. There was a long face-to-face silence. " I believe," he said then, deliberately, " that there's a way out of this. I've got—I've got the glimmerings of an idea. And anyhow, you've got six weeks—that is to say, five weeks before you need start for Moscow. I'll start there as soon as I can dig up a passport—say the day after to-morrow."

"But—— " the Count started to demur, sadly, hopelessly. He knew his Russia. He knew his own people; long before then he had scratched an illiterate saint and found a devil incarnate.

"But hell!" Charters interrupted him, forcefully. "Sit down and shut up, Boris!"

And then he did a thing which afterwards the Count remembered and treasured as a memory. He turned round where he stood to where an oval mirror hung over the mantel behind him, stared for a space of seconds at his reflection in the massive polished glass, and laughed!

"My fatal beauty!" he said. He turned again to face the Count, and once more, in face of that misery and desperation, he laughed. And his laugh had an edge to it like a threat or a promise.

FOR Sir Phillip Charters, Baronet, late of the Diplomatic Service, there were no difficulties at all in regard to his passport and travelling facilities. He secured for himself the official "bag" to carry to Britain's weary, thwarted, and vaguely-defined representative in Moscow; and went thither by air, in three long jumps, with the temporary status and all the impregnable immunity of a King's Messenger. And in Moscow itself there was no trouble in finding Sonia. The British "representative," who fulfilled the office of Consul, Minister, and scapegoat—and likewise that of target for international insults by improvised or self-appointed statesmen—knew all about her. She was a "prisoner at large"; what need to house her and guard her in a city where, without her "papers," her licence to live, she could not have a roof over her for the night, could not buy food or a railway ticket, nor safely pass a Red Guard, lounging on sentry-duty at a street-corner with his loaded rifle and fixed bayonet, his lust and his empty belly?

She was a tall, slim girl—a good deal the slimmer for the exiguous dietary which the world-emancipating revolution has imposed upon Russia. She was as tall for a woman as he was for a man; she had hair—and a lot of it—the colour of burnished bronze; and a face wherein the *régime* of Messrs. Lenin and Trotsky had composed the small and pretty features—the level mouth, the intense eyes with their strong brows—to a sternness of composure and repression.

"Do you remember me at all, Sonia?"

This was in a room at the British mission, whither she had been summoned to meet him.

She looked him up and down, his well-clad figure that was lean but not emaciated, his gravity which was not like hers—the gravity of a painful and mirthless life—and all the cleanliness and easy trimness of his accoutrement. She herself was dressed like a rag-picker.

"I remember you," she answered. "Of course I remember you! And if you remember me, then think of me as you saw me last—before you saw me "—her hands travelled in a gesture over the ruin of her clothes, over that wreck and defilement which Bolshevism has established as the uniform of its beneficiaries—"before you saw me like this!"

Charters frowned. "You *don't* remember me really, my dear, or you'd know that now I'm here you won't be 'like this' any longer. That's all over and done with. I've come to take you to England."

"England!"

She was sitting in a small arm-chair; he was standing before her in the little ugly room. As she repeated his word, her thin face suddenly flamed with the ardours of a hope and a longing. And then it died again at once to its stillness. She shook her head.

"Ah!" She breathed deeply. "You don't know, then—you don't know—they're going to—to——"

He nodded vigorously. "I do know," he said. "They're going to murder you as a hostage if your father doesn't come back; and if he does, they'll murder him for a certainty when he's served their turn. And no one in the world can stop it. Except you!"

She gaped at him. "Except—— ?"

He nodded again.

"Except you!" he repeated. "Sonia, I've left nothing undone that I could do alone. I went for the Russian Delegation in London, single-handed and through the Foreign Office. No use! I mobilized all the money I've got for bribing. No use! I've been at the Commissar for Foreign Affairs here; no use! You see, my dear, you're a Russian subject; they've got a sort of ghastly right to do as they like with you. Am I frightening you? I only want you to understand!"

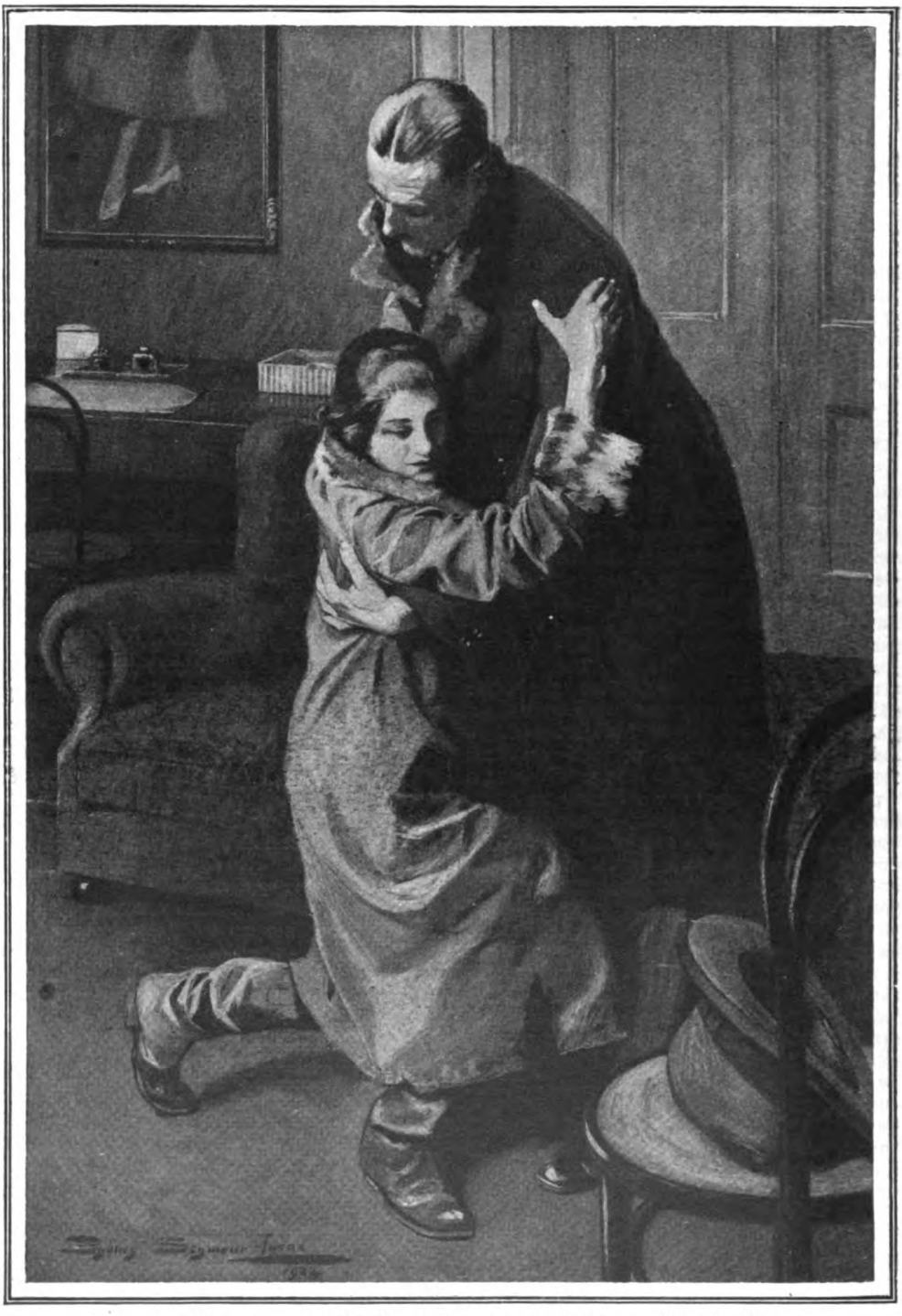
The girl's face had stiffened in her sorely-learned habit of fortitude.

"Nobody can frighten me any more," she answered.

"That's good, I hope," he said. "That's fine! And now, I want to ask you something. Do you remember, as a kid, coming home from school for the holidays? You always used to give me a kiss. What's the matter with me, now that you're coming home from hell?"

Her eyes were very steady and intent, and her voice was dull and level when, after some seconds, she answered:—

"You've come a long way if you've come for a kiss, Phillip," she said. "But take it



She was sinking towards the floor when he caught her and hauled her up.

if you want it. Take as many as you please. Everybody does ! "

" I say ! " Charters was startled. " What do you mean ? "

She sighed. " It's strange already to see anybody shocked at anything," she said, wearily. " There was a time when an insult could hurt me or frighten me ; but that was ages ago. Since I was arrested I have to report myself daily to the police, and the lieutenant always kisses me."

" Does he ? " said Charters. " Does he, by God ? " He stared at her for an instant. His keen, pleasant face was suddenly bleak and grim. " Perhaps he'd like to kiss *me* for a change ! "

Her firm-set lips curved in the shape of a faint smile. She was practically under sentence of death and torture, with preliminaries of outrage and defilement ; her tender flesh was toughened by hardship ; her soul was calloused by daily insult and oppression. She had been brought up in delicate nurture, habituated to refinements and niceties ; and now Lenin, dying disgustfully in a padded room, crawling about the floor of it on hands and knees and howling like any other wolf, was better provided for than she. The girl executioners wore her clothes and lived in her home ; and yet she could smile.

And there you have it ! Bolshevism is simply war on the people who can smile !

" You're not a Russian subject ! " she said,

" No ! " said Charters, shortly. " I'm not ! " Then, after a pause : " You are ! Do you like it ? "

She didn't answer that. He went on :—

" Sonia, we were always pals, weren't we ? I always liked you, and I believe you liked me. Didn't you ? "

Only her eyes replied.

" I've never been in love," he continued. " I've never asked a woman to marry me. I think I've missed a lot. I've got nothing to offer a woman except my name and my money—those, and eternal gratitude and devotion to one who would teach me the things I don't know and give me the things I've missed. And, Sonia—I don't want to use it as an inducement ; I know, by just looking at you, that you can't be bribed—but it's true all the same. It's this : Lady Charters would be a British subject ! Sonia —Sonia——"

She rose. " You—you are asking me to marry you, Phillip ? " she gasped.

" Asking you ? Do you want me to go on my knees and pray you to ? "

They were face to face. " No ! " she said. " Let me go on mine ! "

And she was sinking towards the floor when he caught her and hauled her up.

" You're done with all that," he said. " Done with it, Sonia ! Remember that ! And now—and now—I'll have that kiss ! "

HORROCKS, the British representative, in the exercise of his functions as Consul made them man and wife within the next hour. Half an hour later Charters made a move.

" Where are you going, Phillip ? " asked Lady Charters.

He didn't smile. " Not far," he answered. " I'm just going to kiss a lieutenant of police."

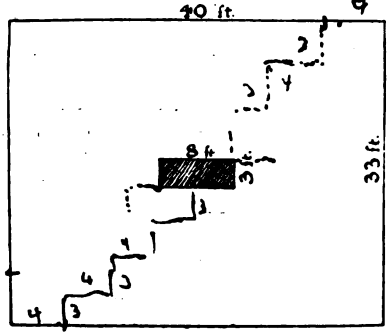
He did, too, and spent his wedding-night in jail. But the lieutenant spent that night in hospital.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

809.—A CARPET PUZZLE.

THE diagram represents a carpet 40 feet in length and 33 feet in width. Through an accident a hole has unfortunately been burnt in the middle and a small rectangular piece 8 feet by 3 has had to be cut out. It is now required to cut the remainder into two parts that will fit together and form a perfectly square carpet. How is this to be done ? This should be quite easy to readers who are familiar with the past puzzles given in these pages, but it ought to interest the novice considerably. Of course, the piece cut out is exactly in the centre.



810.—THE PEDESTRIAN PASSENGER.

A TRAIN is travelling at the rate of 60 miles per hour. A passenger at the back of the train wishes to walk to the front along the corridor, and in doing so walks at the rate of 3 miles per hour. At what rate is the man travelling over the permanent way ? We will not involve ourselves here in quibbles and difficulties, similar to Zeno's paradox of the arrow and Einstein's theory of relativity, but deal with the matter in the simple sense of motion in reference to the permanent way.

811.—NAMING HIS SONS.

A CORRESPONDENT (R. G. E. F.) sends me the following curious missing word puzzle. It will be understood that

Mr. ……'s surname contains six letters and that each successive son is given a familiar Christian name each containing the same six letters.

When Mr. ……, careful man, baptized his first-born son,
He said: "These selfsame letters six will do for number one."
And when a little later on a second boy there came,
"Economy!" he cried with joy. "We still will use the same."
At length a third arrived, and then he shouted in his joy,
"Those good old letters six we'll use for this our latest boy."
A fourth then came and, with a smile, he viewed his youngest lad.
"Those letters six will do," he cried, "and nought we'll need to add."

812.—CUBE DIFFERENCES.

ANY integer except 1, 4, and twice any odd number may be expressed as the difference of two integral squares in as many ways as it can be split up into pairs of factors, counting 1 as a factor. I have dealt with this fully in the solution to the "Dutchmen's Wives" in my book, "Amusements in Mathematics." I will here merely point out that in the case of odd numbers there is always this pretty and simple way of doing it, though it is not always the only way. To find two squares whose difference is 3, take the integral half (1) and the next number (2) and the difference between the squares of 1 and 2 is 3. If we were given 13, the square of 6 and 7 (similarly obtained) will supply the answer. And so on. So if we wanted to find the way of making the number 1234567 the difference between two squares we could at once write down 617283^2 and 617284^2.

But if we want to express a number as the difference between two cubes it is quite a different matter and not so easily solved. But it will be found an interesting little exercise to try and discover the two cubes whose difference is 1234567.

813.—KNIGHT ERRANTRY.

I HAVE just found amongst some old papers the following curious chess puzzle by Mr. G. E. Carpenter of New York. Arrange the pieces as properly set for the playing of a game. Then we have these queer conditions. Only the Knights can move or capture or be captured. White to play and Black to force mate in six moves. I have never seen Mr. Carpenter's solution, but I have just worked out the answer with great interest. Understand quite clearly that there is no play of any sort except by the four Knights, who can only capture themselves, and that a Knight at Q 6 would therefore be checkmate unless it could be captured by another Knight.

814.—PALINDROMES.

IF I were asked how many palindromes (words which spell backwards and forwards the same) there are in the English language, I should reply that I think the number must lie somewhere between 100 and 150. It is an interesting little pastime to try and write out a list of palindromes beginning and ending successively with every letter of the alphabet. With many of the letters there should be no difficulty whatever, such words as Anna, bib, did, and eye occurring to one immediately, but some other letters are far from easy and a few are impossible. What is the smallest number of letters for which you fail to find any palindromes?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

805.—ARCHERY.

THE lady archer must have used six arrows with which she scored 17, 17, 17, 17, 16, 16, making exactly 100.

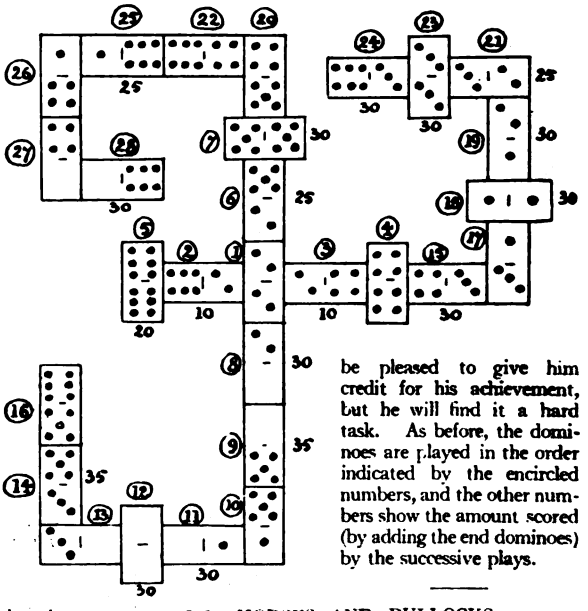
806.—DIGITS AND SQUARES.

(I.) THE only number with the peculiarity that its first and last digits multiplied together gives its square root is 784, where $7 \times 4 = 28$ and $28^2 = 784$.

(II.) There are three five-figure numbers such that the number formed by the first two figures added to the number formed by the last two figures equals a cube. They are 56169 (the square of 237), where $56 + 65 = 125$ (cube of 5); 63001 (the square of 251), where $63 + 01 = 64$ (cube of 4); 23104 (the square of 152), where $23 + 04 = 27$ (cube of 3).

807.—DOMINO SOLITAIRE.

THE arrangement shown has, so far as I know, never been beaten. Starting with the double 2 we find that the total score is 485 If any reader can beat this I shall



be pleased to give him credit for his achievement, but he will find it a hard task. As before, the dominoes are played in the order indicated by the encircled numbers, and the other numbers show the amount scored (by adding the end dominoes) by the successive plays.

808.—HORSES AND BULLOCKS.

REDUCING the amounts to shillings we have to solve the indeterminate equation $344x = 265y + 33$. This is easy enough if you know how, but as this is not a mathematical journal it is, of course, impossible for me to show the best method of proceeding. For the entertainment (and possible perplexity) of the reader I will show on this occasion all the *working* that is necessary, but to explain its *meaning* would take at least a page, so I must leave the reader to puzzle out as best he may what it means!

	1	3	2	1	4
344	265	79	28	23	5
	61	47	14	5	4
	11	11			
	671	517			
	344	265			
	327	252			

We thus find that x is 252 and y is 327, so that if he buys 252 horses for 344s. apiece and 327 bullocks at 265s. apiece, the horses will cost him in all 33s. more than the bullocks.

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for August, 1926.

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Frontispiece: " 'Sh ! " said my pretty cousin. From the back of the platform there emerged a most admirable donkey. Having danced nimbly to the centre of the stage, it began to sing in a rich baritone.

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The characters and names in the stories in "The Strand Magazine" are entirely imaginary and have no reference to real persons.

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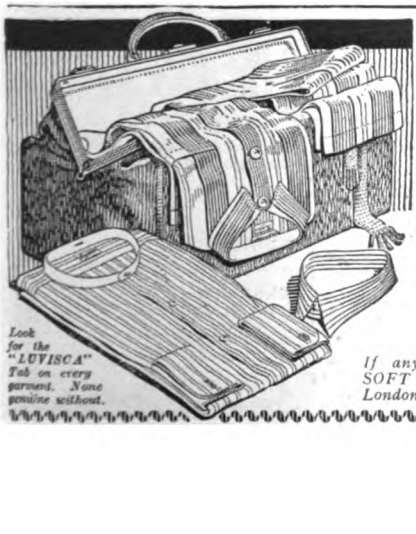

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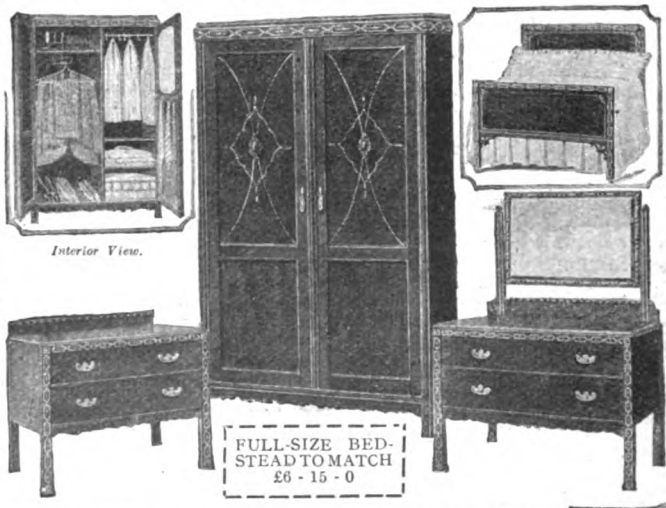

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To face back of Frontispiece.

The
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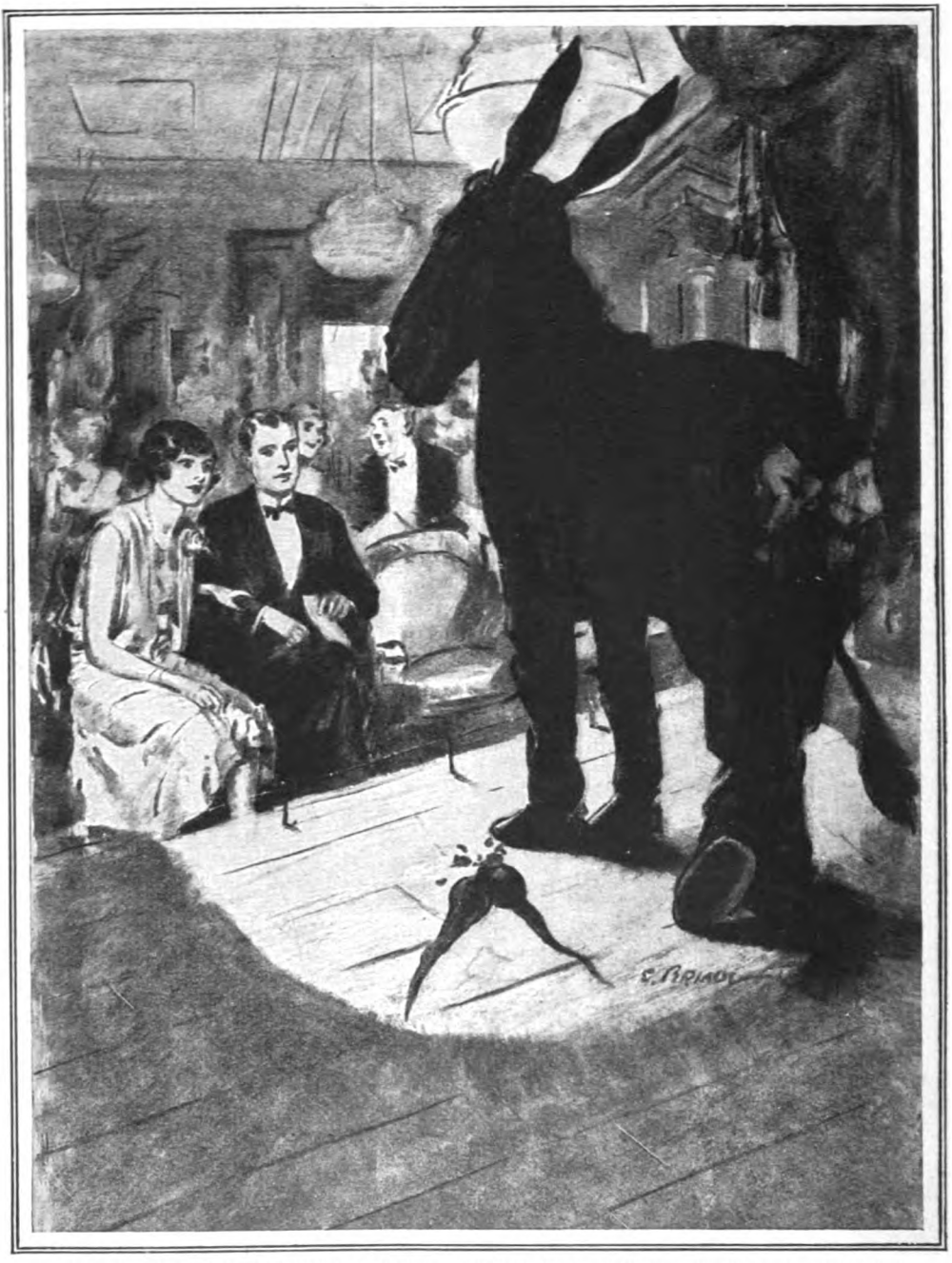
MAGAZINE

AUGUST, 1926.

Next Month:
THE EYE OF ALLAH
A new short story
BY
RUDYARD
KIPLING



"'SH!" SAID MY PRETTY COUSIN. FROM THE BACK OF THE PLATFORM THERE EMERGED A MOST ADMIRABLE DONKEY. HAVING DANCED NIMBLY TO THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE, IT BEGAN TO SING IN A RICH BARITONE.

(See page 117.)

The Hotel Game

By

DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by
S. BRIAULT

THE big hotel at Strathbogles, N.B., took I've forgotten how many years to build, and covers I can't quite remember how many acres of land. It is surrounded by lochs, burns, glens, and bonnie braes. It has a winter-garden, a ballroom, a Turkish bath, a post-office, a rathskellar, a barber's shop and an American bar. Wandering confusedly about its park-like grounds are no less than four golf-courses—all designated by names which no Sassenach can ever hope to pronounce, and all well up to championship standard. It has two dozen hard tennis courts, a bowling green, and the largest garage north of the Tweed. Every bedroom has a bath-room, and every bathroom is lined through-out with purest marble. At no point in the vast building is it possible to be more than five yards from a telephone. And finally, there is no place in the whole of Scotland where there is less risk of hearing anyone talking Scotch.

To reach what the management modestly describe as " The Sportsman's Paradise," you leave your house in London shortly after dinner, drive to one of the northern termini, enter a sleeping-car, and—after a night spent, according to your temperament, either in wondering if the train is going to run off the rails or in blissful unconsciousness —you arrive at Strathbogles shortly before breakfast. The chances are that it will be raining, but the management are prepared for that. You proceed, under cover, to the hotel omnibus ; you hurtle swiftly up a long hill ; and there you are. The Swiss porter touches his cap, the cockney under-porter seizes your baggage. A warm welcome is extended to you by the Italian gentleman at the reception bureau, and his French under-ling conducts you to your room. So long as the rain continues, you might just as well be arriving at any hotel de luxe in any large town in the world ; but Strathbogles was built to meet a very definite demand on the part of hotel-patrons, and it is hardly for you—a mere fly on its wheel—to complain because the excellent breakfast is served without either porridge or scones.

We were all—the party consisted of my Uncle George, my Aunt Clara, my pretty cousin, and myself—quite glad to disperse to our separate apartments when we had dealt with this meal, for even the best of sleeping-cars is apt to leave you a bit raw at the back of the eyeball. I treated myself to a bath in my marble bathroom, finished my unpacking, gazed out of the window at the rain, and then, I suppose, I must have fallen asleep. There is no doubt, anyhow, that I had been dreaming of telephones for some time, before the dream merged into reality. Then, with a start, I remembered where I was, and reached for the receiver.

" Is that you ? " asked my pretty cousin's voice.

I admitted my identity.

" What on earth are you doing ? " was the next question.

" Nothing," I said.

" Do you know what time it is ? "

I looked at my watch.

" About five minutes to one," I answered.

" I don't want to know that," said my pretty cousin—a little unreasonably, I thought. " What I mean is, how much longer have I got to hang about here in the

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sitting-room by myself ? " And then, before I could cope with this question : " I say ! "

" Yes ? "

" Do you know what I've discovered ? "

" No," I said. There was an excited note in her voice, but there's nothing unusual about that. " What is it ? "

" There's a concert here to-night."

FOR my own part, this intelligence left me as lukewarm as it found me. But there are certain people—and Audrey is conspicuous among them — for whom the value of any entertainment is at once trebled by its being given in unsuitable or unexpected surroundings. She would never dream of wasting an evening at a concert in a concert-hall—there are few more whole-hearted lowbrows than my pretty cousin—but offer her the same, or inferior, sounds on a pier, in the saloon of a liner or the lounge of an hotel, and neither age nor infirmity among the rest of the audience will keep her out of the best seat. Realizing all this, I did my best to play up.

" A concert ? " I repeated. " How did you find out ? "

" There's a notice in the hall," she said. " And it's a gala night, too."

This, as I understood the language of hotels, meant first that the price of the preceding dinner would be raised, and secondly that we should be expected to attend the concert wearing paper caps and carrying air-balloons.

" What fun," I said.

" What ? " said my pretty cousin. " I can't hear you."

It struck me at this point that it might be preferable to continue our conversation face to face.

" Wait a minute," I said. " I'll come along to you."

" What ? "

I knew quite well what was happening. As Audrey has often explained to me, her style of hairdressing makes it necessary to hold a telephone-receiver about four inches from the ear. Sometimes she forgets to do this and hears what one says, but as soon as she remembers it is all up.

" Never mind," I shouted. And in another minute I had joined her in the sitting-room.

" This weather," she informed me, " gives me a pain in my neck."

" Literally ? " I inquired.

" Oh, don't be a goat. What do you think of my new clothes ? "

She spun gracefully round, and I took in a vision of a Fair-Isle jumper, a very short skirt, and a great deal of cousinly leg.

" They look," I reported, " both expensive and inadequate. Is that what you meant ? "

" Exactly," she answered. " What on earth are we going to do ? "

So far as I was concerned, it being the first day of my first holiday for some months, I would be quite glad to do nothing but wait for lunch. If I said this, though, it would only mean that I should be called a stick-in-the-mud. So I tried to change the subject.

" Tell me more about this concert," I said.

" Oh," said Audrey, sitting down again, " it's just a concert. There's a ventriloquist, I think, and the hotel orchestra. Oh, yes—and a donkey."

" A donkey, did you say ? " It sounded to me like anything but " just a concert."

" Oh, not a real donkey, you idiot," said my pretty cousin. " A comic one."

" Like a pantomime, do you mean ? "

" How should I know ? " she asked, suddenly disclaiming all responsibility for the donkey. " It just says, ' The Brothers Bantock and their wonderful donkey.' I suppose they dress up."

" In that case," I pointed out, " it ought to say ' *in* their wonderful donkey.' "

" Oh, don't be so deadly," said my pretty cousin. From the sudden look of concentration in her face, I saw that she was searching swiftly for an addition to this retort which should compare me to the animal under discussion. But she missed her opportunity, for at this moment my Uncle George came into the room.

" Well ? " he said, rubbing his hands together. " What about lunch ? "

The suggestion met with general approval. Audrey went off to collect her mother, and my uncle told me a long story about his rheumatism, which—as he informed me not for the first time—was a far more reliable guide to weather conditions than anything that was ever printed in the papers. Then he discovered that he had forgotten to take his eyeglasses out of the pocket of his other suit, and went back to his room ; while my Aunt Clara came in from hers and—by an odd coincidence—told me all about *her* rheumatism. Presently Uncle George came back, and then Aunt Clara remembered that she had forgotten her bag. And then Uncle George came back again and remembered that he had forgotten his cigar-case. And then Audrey suddenly said that if they were going to have lunch downstairs she thought she ought to put on another hat.

But Uncle George was very firm about this.

" You can't keep everyone waiting," he said, and so—impossible as it had begun to appear—we really did escape from the sitting-room at last.

THERE are, I believe, six different kinds of restaurant in that huge building, and as we sampled the whole series at one time or another, I carry away rather a confused memory as to which, on this first day, secured our patronage. To tell the truth, they were all such adepts at causing you to eat more than you wanted, and more than you knew was good for you, and—particularly—more than you could really afford, that their minor distinctions have, in my own case, faded into the background. Whether, therefore, we gorged ourselves in the *Café des Empereurs* or the *Salon des Gourmets*, I am unable to state. I do know, however, that as we all came staggering out again—about three o'clock—my pretty cousin, making a last effort, suddenly caught me by the sleeve.

"I *must* have some air," she said.

I thought she was suggesting that we should brave the elements together, but when I said something about getting my stick, she cut me short.

"No, no," she said. "Air. Not exercise."

If she had put it the other way round, nothing would have been easier. There are very few hours of the day when the Strathbogles dance-band isn't playing in one or other of the well-heated public rooms. But if my pretty cousin would neither walk nor play golf—and considering the weather, there was very little reason why she should—then I didn't quite see how she was to get what she wanted.

I pointed this out.

"Nonsense," she said—faintly but obstinately. "Come this way, and I'll show you."

SO we deserted my uncle and aunt, who had decided to play cards with each other in the sitting-room, and I followed her through the Palm Court and past the post-office and so arrived in the entrance hall—or, as the management prefer to describe it, the Grand Vestibule. Here we forced our way out through the revolving doors, and then my pretty cousin stopped.

"We'll sit there," she announced, pointing to the wicker chairs which were set on both sides of the large, covered porch, "and—yes, I know what we'll do. We'll play the Hotel Game."

"We'll do what?" I asked, raising my eyebrows and taking the seat next to hers.

"Oh, you know," said my pretty cousin. "Of *course* you know. Didn't we play it at —— Oh, no; I'd forgotten. You weren't there."

"Where?"

"Well, perhaps it was somewhere else," she admitted. "But it's an awfully good game. What shall we play for?"

I knew this was coming, and I tried desperately to make a stand.

"We won't play for anything," I said, "until I've learnt the rules. And if it's anything like that new card game you tried to teach me last week——"

"Oh, that," she interrupted. "But everyone loses at that the first time they play. No, this is quite different."

"You mean, I might win?"

"Easily. But if you don't——"

"Well?"

"I saw a jumper in a glass case in the hall this morning, and I think we'll play for that. It was really awfully cheap."

The word "really" used in this context means—as I well know—the exact opposite of its definition in the dictionary.

"How much?" I asked, cautiously.

"Eight guineas," said my pretty cousin. "It's sort of silky stuff, and the most perfect reddy-orange kind of colour. And awfully amusing sleeves."

"Oh," I said dryly. "I shall look well in that."

"Don't be funny," said my pretty cousin. "I'm only talking about what we'll do if I win. Of course, if you win, I shall—well, we'll see about that."

This seemed to me about as near as we were likely to get to settling the stakes, and I returned to the main subject.

"How do we play?" I asked.

"Well," said my pretty cousin, "first of all you choose someone who's staying at the hotel. Or a party of people, if you like. But one or two is the best number."

"People you know?" I inquired.

"No, of course not. The game is to find out as much about them as you can. There's a time-limit, you see, and the one who finds out most wins."

I tried to take this in.

"But how do you start?" I asked.

"That's entirely your affair," said my pretty cousin, warming to her work as instructress. "But there are two very important rules."

"To wit?"

"What?"

"I mean, what are the two rules?"

"Well, the first is that you mustn't speak to them."

"Good," I said. This didn't make it any easier, but I saw at once that it would spare me considerable embarrassment—both personally and on behalf of my pretty cousin.

"And the second," she proceeded, "is that you mustn't ask questions about them. I mean, it's not fair to worm things out of the waiters, or anybody like that."

" Quite," I said. " That sounds a very sensible sort of rule."

" It makes it more sporting," my pretty cousin explained.

" May you look in the register ? " I asked.

" No," she said, firmly. " As a matter of fact, that's the third rule. The register is absolutely barred."

From one point of view I welcomed this string of inhibitions as giving Audrey less chance for getting into the kind of difficulty from which I spend half my life in extricating her. On the other hand they were certainly going to cramp my own style.

" Then what may you do ? " I was reduced to asking.

" You watch them," said Audrey. " You try and notice little things about them. You overhear what they're saying."

" I don't like that," I protested.

" Oh, don't be absurd. That's half the fun. And, besides, there's another rule about that."

" Rule Four ? "

" Yes. If they spot you listening to them and complain about it, then you lose the match. It doesn't matter what you've found out, or if the other person hasn't found out anything at all. You just lose the whole game."

You would be lucky, I thought, if you lost no more than that.

" I see," I said slowly.

" The two great scoring points," my pretty cousin continued, " are their names and their professions. But——"

" Yes, but half a minute," I cut in. " How do you find out who's got it right ? Isn't that rather a difficulty ? "

" Oh, no," she said. " As soon as the time-limit's up, and you've turned in your report, you can go straight to the register, or the manager, or the people themselves, and ask anything you like. It's not easy, of course, but—— Oh, and that reminds me."

" Another rule ? " I asked.

" Yes. It's cheating if you watch them taking their letters from the rack, but it's not cheating if they leave the envelopes about after they've read them. Now, then ; are you ready ? "

" Ready for what ? "

" To start playing, of course."

I wasn't at all ready. Apart from my profound conviction that Audrey had anything like a dozen other rules up her sleeve —any of which would serve to disqualify me—I thoroughly mistrusted the game. I knew so well how easily my pretty cousin can be carried away. I knew how inevitably I should be held responsible by her parents for everything which might arise from this weakness. And I knew, also, that——

" Oh, come on," she said at this point. " Don't be a stick-in-the-mud."

The day may come, though I shall be an old man then, when this taunt fails to make me throw my better judgment to the winds. On the present occasion, though, I might also plead the extreme relentlessness of that North British rain. After all, we had absolutely nothing else to do.

" All right," I said, smothering my own objections. " I'm on."

" Hurrah ! " cried my pretty cousin. And the remaining details of the contest were arranged at once. The time-limit was to expire at bed-time that evening, and the prize would be handed to the successful competitor the following morning. The only thing that remained was to pick our unconscious quarry.

AND for this purpose, as Audrey pointed out, we could hardly have found a better spot. Even during the few minutes that we had occupied those wicker chairs, an almost constant stream of guests had been passing to and fro before us ; some doggedly and courageously sallying forth to golf, others returning in saturated disgust, and a third section rolling up in cabs and motors from the station—arrivals by the afternoon train. And yet my pretty cousin seemed hard to satisfy.

" No, no," she said, as for the fourth or fifth time I suggested making a start. " You must let me choose a good one."

" I don't see," I protested, a little impatiently, " why you should choose at all. This is the Sportsman's Paradise, remember, and I'm not going to play under a handicap."

" But someone's got to choose," she argued.

I was ready for that.

" Not at all," I said. And I pointed out through the driving mist to where the hotel omnibus was speeding towards us up the hill. " You see that bus," I added. " The first person who gets out of it is our lawful prey."

" Our what ? "

" I mean, we've got to choose the first person who gets out of the omnibus."

" Oh," said Audrey. And then : " What if several people get out together ? "

" They'd find it very difficult," I replied. " But if it's a party of visitors, then we'll sleuth the lot."

And at this moment the omnibus came to a standstill before the porch. The driver leapt from his seat, ran round to the back, and opened the door.

We held our breaths and stared in a

She spun gracefully round. "What do you think of my new clothes?"

manner which would have been unpardonable anywhere except at a large hotel. Very deliberately a gentleman in a hard hat and a black overcoat stepped out of the vehicle. He turned and looked back into its interior.

"Wait," murmured my pretty cousin. "It's somebody's valet. He doesn't count."

Why this class distinction?

"I don't see——" I began, equally hurriedly. And then I stopped. The second passenger, also rather noticeably urban in his attire, was just emerging from the narrow doorway. With so much at stake I looked anxiously for the stigmata of his age, race, profession, or origin, but frankly there was nothing that I could take hold

of. He was just a clean-shaven individual in neat, dark clothes—a little stouter than his predecessor, but otherwise equally undistinguished. He might have been anything from a bank clerk to a consulting surgeon.

"Well?" I whispered.

"Wait," said my pretty cousin again.

So we waited; but the omnibus had now discharged its full cargo. As the under-porter picked up the new arrivals' hand-baggage, it moved away from the porch and they were left standing there alone. As yet there had been no evidence as to whether they were acquainted with each other, or merely chance occupants of the same bus. But now, after gazing solemnly at the blurred landscape, they turned to each other. A couple of inaudible phrases were exchanged between them, they moved past our chairs, and then the revolving doors swallowed them up.

I looked at my pretty cousin.

"I take it," I said, inquiringly, "that they count as one?"

She nodded her head slowly.

"I suppose so," she said. And then: "But they're awfully dull."

"That," I replied, "is an opinion with which I am disposed to agree. At the same time we did say——"

"Oh, I know," she interrupted. "I'm not dreaming of backing out. And, after all," she added, suddenly, "it's really better, in a way, that it shouldn't be too easy. It's more sporting, I mean."

I agreed again.

"It's all that," I said. "Do you still think the first one was a valet?"

My pretty cousin looked at me suspiciously.

"What do *you* think?" she asked.

"I'm fogged," I answered, truthfully. "Perhaps they're both valets."

"No," said Audrey. "In that case they wouldn't have come to the front door. I think they're more likely to be retired grocers."

I was astonished at this example of feminine intuition.

"Grocers?" I echoed. "Why? And why retired?"

"Well, perhaps they're not," said my pretty cousin. "Let's trail them into the hall."

SHE got up, and I followed her indoors. The two grocers (or valets) were leaning over the counter of the reception bureau, engaged in conversation with the Italian exquisite on the other side. My pretty cousin and I sauntered airily past.

"Yes, I know," the stouter one was saying. "But we caught the earlier train. You see, we had to play near Glasgow yesterday."

The reception clerk seemed satisfied with this statement. He dipped a pen in his inkpot and handed it to the last speaker.

"Ze rooms are quite ready, sir," he said.

The ritual proceeded. The register was signed—while I conscientiously looked the other way; the reception-clerk smote his little bell; a page came forward; and the new arrivals disappeared into the lift.

At the same moment my pretty cousin gave me a sharp prod.

"Did you hear that?" she asked, her eyes sparkling. And then, as I looked a little puzzled: "Do you mean to say you didn't?"

"Hear what?" I retorted.

"They're golf pro's," she said, scornfully. "And don't forget," she added in the same breath, "that I found it out first."

But I was still puzzled.

"They don't look like golf pro's," I said.

"But didn't you hear them? They said they were playing near Glasgow yesterday. What else do you suppose they'd play there? Skittles?"

"No," I admitted. "But still—— Well, why pro's?"

"Because they said they'd *had* to play," said my pretty cousin. "You're a jolly fine detective!"

"But they might just have meant they'd promised some friends. And, besides"—this, I thought, was unanswerable—"where are their clubs?"

"In the omnibus, of course," said Audrey. "They've gone round to the luggage entrance."

Yet somehow or other I was not convinced. Golf professionals, as is natural in so large a body, are by no means all of the same type. But in one respect, at any rate, their open-air life does generally leave its mark.

"They're both far too pale," I pointed out.

I could see that my pretty cousin was shaken; but only for a moment.

"But look at the weather," she said. "How on earth are you going to get sunburnt if it's always like this?"

Unconsciously my eyes followed hers through the large window near which we were standing, and in an instant I had forgotten all about the Hotel Game in the joy of a far more important discovery.

"By Jove!" I exclaimed. "Look!"

"Look at what?"

"The rain," I said. "It's stopped."

And I had spoken no less than the truth. Suddenly and miraculously the impenetrable mist had broken up. Across the valley it

was still rolling in sullen wreaths, but overhead it was already faint and patchy, and even as we watched, a pale glimmer of sunshine filtered down and lit up the red flag on one of the four eighteenth greens.

"Get your bag, Audrey," I said, excitedly. "Buck up, and we'll play nine holes before tea."

For a second she looked across at the lift. She was still, I could see, thinking of her claims to the orange jumper, and of her chances of catching the two men as (or if) they came down again. But the light was growing stronger every moment. The two men would have to wait.

"All right," she said. "Stop there."

OFF she flew, and in as short a time as could be expected where my pretty cousin was concerned—say twenty minutes—she had rejoined me in the hall. As we passed out through the porch again, the sun was fairly sparkling in the puddles in the drive. So far as the eye could reach, the lochs, burns, glens, and bonnie braes were shining in a glory of blue, green, and purple.

"Scots wha hae!" she remarked, enthusiastically.

"Absolutely!" I agreed.

We hurried down to the club-house, rushed through the rather expensive preliminaries, and emerged on the course.

"Caddie?" I suggested.

"Not for nine holes," said my pretty cousin. "I hate caddies."

So did I. I teed up for her, and away we went. Despite our night journey, we were both playing well under our respective handicaps. The greens were still a bit slow, but the drainage at Strathbogles must be wonderful, for the fairways were firm and solid.

I think it was at the fifth hole that a not uncommon difficulty beset us. The green was in a hollow in the side of a little hill, and as I replaced the pin—after sinking an exquisite though superfluous putt—I looked round for a direction post which should tell us where to go next. But I looked in vain.

"What are you staring at?" asked my pretty cousin.

"I'm wondering where the next tee is," I explained.

"There's a little path here," she said, running up the incline. "I expect——"

And then she stopped abruptly, turned, beckoned to me frantically, and laid her finger on her lips.

"Look!" she muttered as I joined her. "What did I tell you?"

There was no tee to be seen. We seemed to be about mid-way on a hole belonging to one of the other three courses. But there, on the well-shaven pretty, were the two men whom we had last seen talking to the reception clerk. They were still in their dark suits, though they had exchanged their hard hats for a couple of cloth caps. Nor had they any golf bags, but one of them carried three ancient clubs under his arm, and the other, two.

I was distinctly impressed. It is notorious that professionals of the older school favour the most unsuitable garments for the great game—as though indicating to the rest of us how little such things matter. And it is no less common knowledge that such persons will perform prodigies with the bare minimum of implements. I once saw—— However, that's got nothing to do with what happened now.

"I believe you're right," I whispered, as we crept a little closer. "But——"

"Pretend to be looking for your ball," said Audrey, hurriedly. "They mustn't suspect we're watching them."

It seemed a trifle unnecessary, but I knew it was useless to argue. I poked realistically at the heather with my mashie, and we both held our breaths. And then:—

"Good heavens!" said my pretty cousin. "Look!"

"What?"

"The flag's right over that far bunker, and he's taking a mid-iron."

It was true. It was also true that the player—the thin one this time—was holding his mid-iron in a manner which I had never previously seen attempted.

"What an extraordinary grip!" I murmured.

"Hush!" said my pretty cousin. "Now we'll see something."

And we did. The thin player whirled his club over his right shoulder, his left foot came clean off the ground; there was a slow, tottering pause, and then—swoosh! I don't know that I've ever seen a bigger divot taken out of a first-class course. As for the ball, it hadn't even been touched.

But this wasn't all.

"My shot now," cried the stout man, striding into position behind the same ball. He took three fierce waggles, spun himself into a knot, untied himself with a violent wrench—and his club, soaring out of his hands, flew clean over his head. As it fell within two yards of me, I saw that it was a putter!

Notwithstanding the rules of the Hotel Game, common politeness demanded that I should pick it up. As I did so, the stout player came lumbering towards me.

"Much obliged, sir," he said, as I handed him his property. "I hope we're not in your way?"

"Not at all," I answered. "We're playing on the other course."

"Thanks very much," he said. "A difficult game, isn't it?"

"Very," said my pretty cousin.

The stout player turned to her and raised his cap.

"We don't get much time for it in our business," he observed.

"No?" said my pretty cousin, in flagrant violation of the rules.

"No," repeated the stout man. "Travelling about too much. Had to borrow these clubs, you know. Haven't touched one since we were in America last year."

He raised his cap again, favoured us with a dull, stolid smile, and withdrew. His companion had in the meantime pocketed their solitary ball, and the two of them began marching away.

I turned to my pretty cousin, and our eyes met.

"Well," I said, unkindly. "So much for the pro's."

"What?" said my pretty cousin.

Perhaps I oughtn't to have rubbed it in like that. I paused before repeating myself, but it seemed that she had really heard me the first time.

"Oh, but you're quite wrong," she said. "Of course they're not pro's." And she laughed. "What an idea!"

I couldn't sit down under that.

"But it was entirely your——"

"Nonsense," she interrupted. "And anyway, you just said you thought I was right."

So I had.

"If you ask me," I said, sliding away from this point, "they're commercial travellers."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"But there aren't any shops at Strathbogles."

"On a holiday, I mean."

"Commercial travellers stopping at an hotel like that," she protested—pointing across at the palatial block which seemed to fill half the horizon. "Rubbish."

"Then what are they?"

My pretty cousin never hesitated.

"The fat one's a business magnate," she informed me; "and the thin one's his confidential secretary."

"Good Lord!" I said. "Why?"

"It's obvious. They travel about on business, and they go to America. If they were just partners, then one of them would stay at home. I bet I'm right."

By the terms of our contest I had, presumably, betted that she was wrong. But to tell the truth, though I wasn't absolutely convinced, I saw no really powerful argument against this theory.

"Well, anyhow," I said, pointing back

supporting her view (" It means they've got a sitting-room of their own "), I couldn't feel that we were appreciably nearer the correct solution. Indeed, there seemed little chance of proving or disproving anything

"I don't know that I've ever seen a bigger divot taken out of a first-class course. As for the ball, it hadn't even been touched."

across the little hollow, " there's the next hole. Shall we go on ? "

After we got in, and at Audrey's special request, we lingered on in the Palm Court instead of rejoining her parents upstairs. Neither magnate, however, nor confidential secretary put in an appearance here, and though my pretty cousin chose to take this as while fettered by such stringent rules, and it struck me that I would be glad when the game was over. It is difficult to engage in really bright conversation with someone, however pretty, whose eyes are constantly wandering off in search of two dull-looking men in dark suits.

But just after my antagonist had left

me to go and dress, an incident took place which altered the whole situation. I had strolled out into the corridor, on a vague voyage of discovery, when my ear was suddenly struck by the sound of music proceeding from behind a closed and nameless door. After one or two uncertain starts, the orchestra—for there seemed to be quite a number of instruments involved—broke into an old-fashioned schottische. The rendering was rhythmic and vigorous, and then, as it presently ceased, the door opened—and out came my two acquaintances of the golf-course.

I deliberately shadowed them.

"All right?" asked the fat one.

"Fine," said the other.

"You've said it," replied the first. "I'd book that band anywhere you like, and guarantee to turn money away."

And with these revealing words he and his companion swept in through another door, slammed it behind them and vanished from my sight.

But I'd got it now. I didn't care if I never saw them again. Their "business," their visits to America, and their pallor, were all explained. The fat man was an impresario—absurd that I hadn't instantly recognized that grim stolidity—and the other was his assistant. In the manner of their tribe they had combined duty with pleasure on this trip to Strathbogles, by securing a private audition of the hotel orchestra, and now—also after the manner of their tribe—they were probably going to tempt it to break its contract. It was, as Audrey would have said, obvious.

AND so certain was I that I had beaten my pretty cousin almost at the post, that I began boasting to her as soon as we took our places for dinner in the *Restaurant des Fleurs*.

She let me get about half-way, and then she shook her head.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because, my dear cuckoo," she replied, "the chambermaid told me everything about half an hour ago."

"The chambermaid!" I expostulated. "But the rules——"

"Oh, I didn't ask her," said my pretty cousin. "She just came out with it. Lord Thetford and his secretary are in the next suite to ours. Well?"

"Never heard of him," I answered firmly.

"Nor had I," said my pretty cousin. "But I telephoned down and got a page to bring me 'Who's Who.' He's chairman of the Anglo-American Transport Trust; he was educated abroad—that's why he can't play golf; and—I've just remembered this—his hobby is music. Is that good enough for you?"

Well, it fitted; and then, again, it didn't. It was possible, also, that Lord Thetford's musical tastes had led him to take an occasional gamble in concert-management, and that we might both be right. I looked thoughtfully across the room, and my eyes were suddenly focused on a familiar sight. The two men were dining together in the far corner, and between them the sleek back of the manager was bowing over the table.

"You see," said Audrey, reading my thoughts, "the manager's talking to them. He wouldn't do that if they were nobodies."

I could think of no better destructive argument than to point out that the two men hadn't dressed.

"You don't need to dress, if you're a lord," said my pretty cousin.

"Oh," I replied, with another foredoomed attempt at sarcasm. "I'll bear that in mind."

At this point my Uncle George began talking about his rheumatism again, and for the rest of dinner the Hotel Game was necessarily in abeyance. Then, about half-past nine, we filed out into the hall, and I was just nerving myself for one of our long and confused games of Bridge, when my pretty cousin suddenly gave a gasp.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"The concert," she explained. "Why didn't you remind me? You *must* take me to the concert."

"But——" I pointed to her father and mother, who were just entering the lift.

"Oh, never mind them. They'd just as soon play with each other. Come on, or we'll miss it."

A burst of applause reached us at this instant from the ball-room, and my pretty cousin whirled me away.

"What?" she asked, as a waiter tried to stop her. "Tickets? Oh, that's all right. How much?"

A guinea each, it appeared. I forked out and we marched up the aisle.

"Here we are," said Audrey, making a bee-line, as usual, for the front row. But again a waiter interposed.

"I beg pardon, miss," he said, "but those seats are reserved."

"Nonsense," said my pretty cousin. "The concert's half over."

The waiter writhed more apologetically than ever.

"The seats are reserved for Lord Thetford, miss," he explained. "His lordship said he might be ——"

"Do you hear that?" interrupted Audrey, flashing her eyes at me. And then, to the waiter: "Well, never mind. We'll sit here."

The waiter—little realizing how nothing but the Hotel Game could have gained him this easy victory—bowed, and fell back. We took our seats, about four places from his lordship's, and as we did so the lights in the body of the ballroom were lowered, while the orchestra struck up a tune.

"Hullo," I began, "that's the same tune that——"

"'Sh!" said my pretty cousin. And then, in a voice of absolute enchantment: "Oh—look!"

From the door at the back of the platform there had just emerged a most admirable donkey. It was true that its hind legs bent the wrong way, but what did this matter when all four legs were so exceptionally skilled at dancing? Nor did the donkey's gifts cease at this point; for having danced nimbly to the centre of the stage, it raised its voice and began to sing in a rich baritone. I knew that my pretty cousin was fully sharing my appreciation of this vocal and visual feast, for she was gripping my forearm only just this side of real pain; and I was naturally annoyed that at this moment two even later arrivals than ourselves should come blundering along in the dark and block my view of the stage. There were impatient murmurs, also, from the rows behind us; and the next thing I knew was that from out of the blackness I had received a sharp and sudden kick on the ankle.

"Ouch!" I gasped.

"Shut up!" whispered Audrey. "It's all right. It's me."

"Well, I wish you——"

"It's them!" she thrilled. "Don't you see?"

"Who?"

"The two men."

I was absolutely certain she was wrong, for the new arrivals, though only visible as silhouettes, were quite the wrong shape.

"Rubbish," I retorted.

"But it *is*," said my pretty cousin, beginning to raise her voice. "I told you so. It's Lord Thetford and——"

"Eh?" chimed in a third, booming voice. And the larger of the two silhouettes turned abruptly and trod on my foot.

"It's all right, my lord," said his companion. "These are the seats."

"Sit down!" contributed a member of the audience from the back.

"Eh?" said the big silhouette, making another turn. This time I saw his face clearly.

"Don't be absurd, Audrey," I said. "Of course it isn't."

"It *is*!" she retaliated, obstinately. "I tell you, the chambermaid said——"

And here the uproar became general. Angry voices behind us mingled with a rapidly-rising argument between my pretty cousin and myself, while Lord Thetford and his secretary continued to stumble blindly up and down the row of seats, the one announcing that he couldn't see a thing and the other issuing incessant directions which his employer as invariably misunderstood. The noise and confusion were indescribable, and I was not surprised that the gifted donkey should hesitate in its performance.

It did more than this, though. As for the fifth or sixth time I besought my pretty cousin (still to the accompaniment of protests from the audience and bleatings from Lord Thetford) to admit her error and restrain her voice, the donkey suddenly disintegrated before my eyes. Its body parted in the middle and both halves stood erect, while the front half impatiently and impetuously removed its head.

"Look here——" it expostulated, loudly.

"Order there, please!" added the hind legs, advancing threateningly towards us. And in the same instant I recognized both halves. They were, I need hardly say, the two men whom we had been sleuthing all the afternoon; the valets, grocers, golf pro's, magnates, impresarios, and noblemen—in short, the Brothers Bantock.

AND so, in the sight of Heaven, the Hotel Game ended in a dead heat. But Audrey said not.

"The rule is," she explained, after I had tipped and apologized our way from the ballroom, "that if nobody guesses right, then the person who suggested the game wins."

It was a monstrous rule, of course. A ridiculous rule. But she was wearing that orange jumper at lunch-time the next day, and—well, after all, as I said all along, the thing was no earthly use to me.

ONLY MOTHER KNEW

By

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

Illustrated by
FRANK OLDHAM

" Oh, you must remember wherever you are,
You are the jam, but your mother's the jar ;
You are the twig, but your mother's the trunk ;
You are the crumb but your mother's the chunk !

So you must endeavour,
Whatever you do,
Not to be clever
Or think it's you.
But intellect smother,
And stick to your mother,
And somehow or other
She'll pull you through ! "

LAURENCE HOUSMAN.

I.

MRS. ANDERSON lay wide awake in the small double-bed which was the only thing which remained in her luxurious house to remind her of her hard, anxious youth. It was not a comfortable bed, also it looked strange among the handsome furnishings of her present room, but nothing would have made her part with that bed.

She had been lying on it, just in the place where she was lying now, when her son Donald had been put, thirty-eight years ago to-morrow, for the first time into her arms. It was in that bed that, fourteen years later, her husband, Andrew Anderson, had died of that hopeless disease, disappointment; though he had worked long and hard, he had never been able to make good. She also knew that it was in this bed that she would die, when her time came.

But Mrs. Anderson did not often think of death, for she had a strong hold on life, and consciously she wished to live as long as possible for the sake of her boy. Though Donald Anderson would be thirty-eight years old to-morrow, she always thought of him as a boy of about—well, nineteen, for it was then that she had felt most anxious about him.

She had gone upstairs early to-night, so as to be fresh to-morrow morning, for Donald would surely arrive some time before breakfast to spend his birthday with his mother.

Mrs. Anderson still had very good ears, and at about half-past ten she heard a man's footfalls hastening along the path leading to the front door of her house.

She sat up and listened. There came a murmur of voices; then the front door closed to; and Jean Macgill, the grim-visaged woman who came from the country which alone, Mrs. Anderson believed, still breeds men and women of the right sort, came up the stairs, and knocked at the bedroom door.

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" Mr. Anderson's sent this letter all the way by messenger. He'll not be coming to-morrow, I'm thinking."

" Manchester,
" Monday.

" My dear mother,

" I have not forgotten that to-morrow is my birthday. We'll have the evening together, for I'll be with you by five o'clock. But before we meet, I want you to know something.

" The day I was twenty—it seems a very long time ago—I promised you I would never ask a woman to marry me without first telling you. I have been friends for some time with the most beautiful, as well as the kindest, woman, in the whole world. But I've only just discovered that I can't live without her, and I do believe that she's discovered that she can't live without me.

" When I think what a big, awkward fellow I am, I can hardly believe in my luck. I hope to have it all fixed up on Wednesday, and on Thursday I'd like to bring her to you, mother. I want you to really care for her, even if you don't think her altogether your sort.

"Your loving son,
" Donald Anderson."

Mrs. Anderson read the letter through twice. Then she put it down on the pretty little table which stood by her ugly old bed.

Her mind travelled back to a few moments ago, and she remembered, with a sort of pitiful surprise, that a few moments ago she had not felt particularly happy. And yet if she had only known what was coming —what a happy woman she ought to have been ! For as far as she knew, then, her boy Donald had still been all her own.

For hours she lay wide awake, staring out into the darkness, her heart like a stone in her bosom; and during those long hours she lived again her life with her son.

Especially did she go back, again and again, to what had been the most glorious day of her life. It would be exactly ten years ago to-morrow, for that great day had been Donald Anderson's twenty-eighth birthday. He had been asked to address the inmates of a juvenile reformatory settlement, and he had chosen for his speech the subject of " Success." Standing above a sea of young faces, his tall, vigorous, still youthful figure drawn up to its full height, he had described to those lads something of his early struggles, and of the way he had won through. He told them how there had come into his mind that which had been his first stepping-stone to fortune. It was the notion of a simple little gadget, now of everyday help and use to every housewife in the land. He recalled his hours and days of anxiety during the comparatively short time which had elapsed before he could patent his gadget, lest someone should forestall him.

There had been a pause, and then all at once a shrill boyish voice had rung out: " Did you tell *nobody*, Mr. Anderson ? " and he had answered, a broad smile suddenly irradiating his face: " Only mother knew ! "

The phrase had caught not only the ears, but the imagination, of the newspaper men present, and since that day there had rarely appeared an allusion to Donald Anderson, and to any of his successful schemes, without the phrase being quoted.

In the watches of that long night Mrs. Anderson told herself, with a sad feeling of bewilderment and pain, that " mother " had known very little about Donald these last few months, not to have guessed that her son's heart had passed into the keeping of another woman.

SHE rose early the next morning, and went out on to the stone terrace of the delightful house her boy had built for her out of the first really big money he had ever earned, in a pretty Surrey village called Galloping Green, within an easy motor drive of London.

There were not a great many rooms in the house, but there was about it an air of stateliness, of solidity, even by now of age, which appealed strongly to her Scotch heart and brain. The little estate—for it was a little estate, with a flowing stream and a lovely wood—had been named by her " Cortachy," after the village which she had left as a girl of nineteen to follow the man she loved into the world.

It was a warm May morning, and on a small table, drawn up by the side of Mrs. Anderson's easy-chair, was the big cup of tea and the small basin of porridge which was all the breakfast she ever ate. She was a small, spare, abstemious woman, still full of physical and mental energy.

Jean Macgill came on to the terrace and laid down a letter and a postcard on her mistress's table. Then she vanished as silently as she had come.

Mrs. Anderson took up the postcard first.

" Worcester,
" Tuesday.

" Dearest Aunt Elsie,

" We're having a wonderful time ! I do wish you could see my babies—over a hundred of them. Such dear little mites. I hate to leave them, even for a fortnight, but I'll be glad to see you.

" Maggie."

Mrs. Anderson's face softened. She loved this girl—though, by the way, she was no longer a girl—for Maggie Oliphant had just turned thirty. The one wish of the older woman's heart for years—a wish, however, that she had been too canny ever to express in words—had been that her son and Maggie Oliphant should some day make a match of it. She felt sure that Maggie was willing, but she had found that Donald, though he had at times certainly toyed with the idea, knew Maggie too well, and that though he was certainly very fond of her. He had missed her when she had gone off to do child-welfare work in the North of England, and he had given a magnificent donation to the Health Centre in which his cousin was working.

Mrs. Anderson put down the postcard and opened the letter. It was from the nurse attendant of her one great friend—a woman now dying slowly of an incurable disease.

"*Dear Mrs. Anderson,*

"*Mrs. Riddell is very bad. I think it would give her pleasure if you could see her for a few minutes some time this week. She says you are not to put yourself out if you're busy.*

"*Yours truly,*

"AMY ROBINSON."

The telephone bell rang in the house, and Jean came out again on to the terrace. "Mr. Gordon has telephoned to know if you could see him if he came right now. He says it's on important business, or he wouldn't be troubling you in the morning."

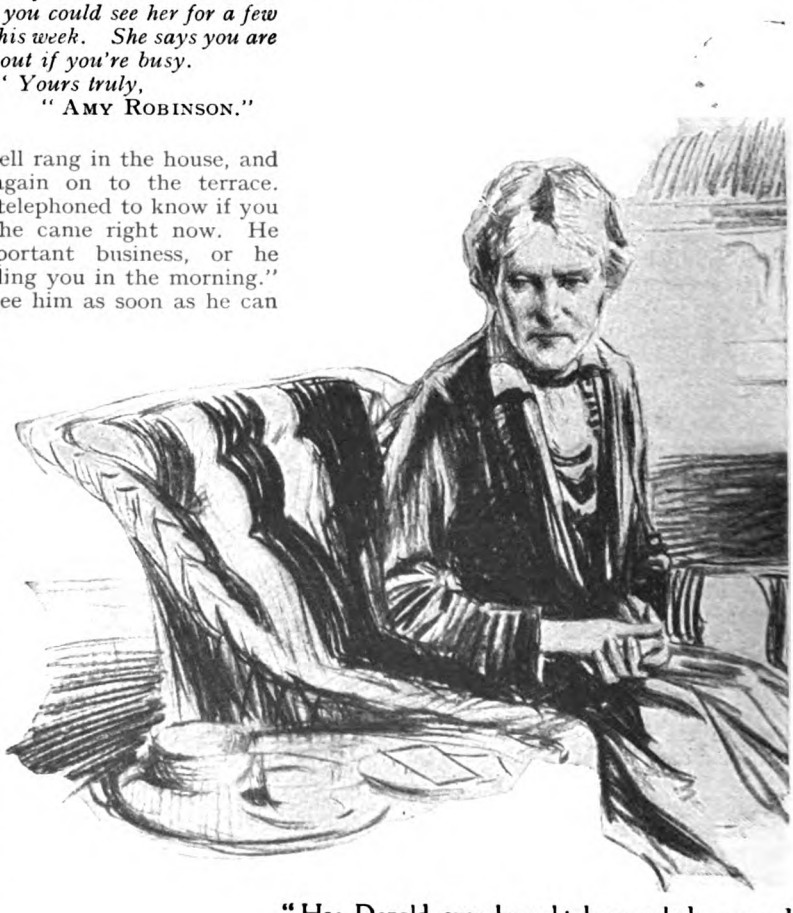
"Say that I'll see him as soon as he can come."

Neil Gordon was Mrs. Anderson's lawyer, and he had been Donald Anderson's friend from boyhood. Each of them had attained success at much about the same time, and since then these two, utterly different as they were, had been of great use to one another.

Mrs. Anderson did not approve of Neil Gordon as a man, though she had a justified trust in him as a lawyer. She regretted his friendship with her son, while well aware of, and in a way grateful for, his deep affection for Donald. Gordon was now a very busy man, and she told herself with a touch of uneasiness that he would not have proposed to come out and see her at this time of the day unless he had something of real importance to tell her, and the one thing of real importance to Mrs. Anderson could only be something about Donald.

After what seemed a very long time, she heard the sound of a car stopping before her gate. Half rising from her chair she turned her head, and looked eagerly at the open door giving into the house. Then there escaped from her a slight exclamation of surprise, for her solicitor, instead of being decorously ushered in through the drawing-room by Jean, had come round through the garden; and he was now striding quickly towards her along the terrace.

Though Neil Gordon had a lithe, active figure, his face was heavily lined, and he was growing bald. As a lawyer, he was



"Has Donald ever brought here a lady named

shrewd, cautious, and prudent—valuable qualities in the legal adviser of a great man of business. But, with regard to his own private life, he was a spendthrift, given to the burning of his candle not only at both ends, but in the middle as well. Unfortunately for him, though he would not have agreed that it was unfortunate, he had always possessed what Donald Anderson lacked, a strong, beckoning attraction for women.

In spite of her sixty-four years, Mrs. Anderson's eyes were very good, and even before he was quite close up to her she saw that her son's friend was feeling very nervous and ill at ease, and her stout old heart became filled with apprehension.

"Well!" he exclaimed, "I've come along for just a little chat with you, Mrs. Anderson. I understand that Donald isn't yet back from Manchester?"

"He'll be here late this afternoon," she said, quietly.

Neil Gordon stuck his right-hand fingers in his waistcoat pocket. It was a characteristic gesture. "It's his birthday to-day, isn't it?" he said.

By way of answer she exclaimed, "Just sit down there, Neil Gordon!"

There was a note of command in her voice, and, as he obeyed her, she looked at him straight in the eyes. "What is it you've come to tell me about Donald?"

He didn't answer for quite a long time, and Mrs. Anderson, during those long moments of tense silence, did not take her eyes off his face.

Gordon looked, this morning, as a man looks who has been going the pace hard into the small hours. Irritably she told herself that the life he led, supping at night-clubs, and working hard all day, must in time affect his business faculties.

"You've been over-enjoying yourself," she suggested, dryly.

"Maybe I have."

And then he said, very, very slowly, "Has Donald said anything to you about himself—I mean lately, Mrs. Anderson?"

She smoothed out a fold of her old-fashioned full black woollen skirt. "I'm inclined to think," she said, coldly, "that there's been a great deal going on lately that 'mother' hasn't known, Neil Gordon."

The lawyer got up out of his chair; he walked across to the stone balustrade; and then he came back and stood over her.

"Has he ever brought here a lady named Mrs. Paradise?" he asked.

A little colour came into Mrs. Anderson's pale face. "Not that I remember," she answered, cautiously. "But at times he asks a good many folk down here."

Then she asked, in a tone she strove to make indifferent, "Is that lady a great friend of Donald?"

"Well, yes, she is."

"And what may she be like?"

He did not look at her as he observed, picking his words: "Mrs. Paradise is a very beautiful woman.

Mrs. Paradise?" he asked.

She is of what I suppose would be called the Spanish type—black hair, glorious liquid-looking eyes, and——"

"Cut all that, Neil," said Donald Anderson's mother, sternly. "What I want to know is what Mrs. Paradise is like inside, not outside. I suppose she's a widow?"

"Well, no," said Gordon, hesitatingly, "she's not a widow, exactly. Her first husband is still alive. I knew her second husband—he is alive, too—and, well, the truth is, I expect you've guessed it by now, Mrs. Anderson, I don't want Donald to be the third lucky man!"

AS she remained silent, he went on, nervously, "I don't want to give you a wrong impression of Mrs. Paradise. She's not at all a bad sort of woman, for all she's twice had to divorce two indifferent husbands. In fact, many people would say she was a very charming lady."

And then Mrs. Anderson asked a question which surprised, and just a little relieved, Neil Gordon. "Is she fond of dancing?" she asked, casually.

He fell into the trap. "Why, yes, she is an exquisite dancer; one of the best dancers I've ever known, and——"

"—— I suppose you introduced Donald to this delightful lady?"

Then, suddenly, even she felt sorry for him, for a look of acute distress came over the shrewd, deeply-lined face.

"Why, yes, I did; and to say I'm sorry is—is an understatement. I'd cut off my right hand not to have done it!"

And then the old woman turned and gazed across the little valley. "This charming lady has been quite a good friend to you, Neil, though you don't recommend her as a wife for Donald, eh?"

He made no answer to that, and she went on: "D'you see much of her now?"

He answered that question at once, eagerly: "I haven't seen her for ever so long! And when Donald told me that he was thinking of marrying her, why—I can't tell you how wretched I felt."

"Does Donald know that you feel like that about it?"

"No," he said miserably, "though I did tell him that I knew for a fact that she is forty-one, though she doesn't look a day over twenty-five!"

"I'd like to know just one thing more. Is this new lady friend of my boy Donald well-to-do?"

Gordon said, uncomfortably: "She always seems to have enough money to do everything she wants. But no, Mrs. Anderson—in confidence I may tell you, as I'm not her lawyer, that Mrs. Paradise is far from well-to-do. But she's one of those clever women who manage to make a little go a long way, and she's got a Belgian maid who's devoted to her."

"I take it that a clever woman of that sort"—slightly mimicking Gordon's voice—"always has some generous friend—a man, maybe, like yourself, Neil, who sees to it that she is not too uncomfortable?"

He put his right hand over his face. "I had no business to speak of her as I have done," he muttered. "She has always been very kind to me."

And then Mrs. Anderson asked another question. "I suppose Donald's not the only man who's been courting her, I mean with a view to marriage, if she's all you describe?"

"Funny you should say that! There has been another chap hanging about her for a long time. A fellow named Wickham—Bob Wickham."

"You mean the man Donald helped through a rough time two or three months ago?"

"He did that to please Mrs. Paradise! But Wickham's getting on all right now. And if Donald wasn't there, well, I think Mrs. Paradise soon would be Mrs. Wickham, for he's much more her sort than Donald is—if you take my meaning?"

"I do take your meaning," said Mrs. Anderson, coldly.

"But she's given Wickham the go-by now—make no mistake about that, Mrs. Anderson! It's Donald she means to get, and will get, unless something's done to prevent it."

"And what do *you* think can be done?"

"I don't know," he said, helplessly. "That's why I've come to see you. She isn't a bit Donald's sort. I wouldn't give him a month to be happy with her. He'd find her out long before thirty days had gone by——"

Violent, primitive, even coarse words trembled on the old woman's lips. But she did not utter them. She only shut her mouth tightly.

"Do you remember," asked Gordon, slowly, "the day Donald stood here and told you and me that he was ruined—'blue-ruined' was the expression he used?"

"Ay," answered Donald's mother, instantly, "I mind me of that day very well. You were very upset, lad."

For the first time this morning there came a kind, even an affectionate, note into her voice.

"Upset—I should think I was!"

He leant forward. "Yet I wish to God, Mrs. Anderson, that we had Donald saying that same thing here now, to-day——"

"You mean that she is just marrying him for his money?"

"Most women who marry rich men do that," said Neil Gordon, harshly.

"That's a lie!" exclaimed Mrs. Anderson. "You've mixed so much with, well, I won't say what sort of women, laddie, that you don't know there are any good women left in the world."

"I know there's you, and I know there's Miss Maggie. I always thought that Donald would end by marrying Maggie."

"So he might have done," she retorted, "if you hadn't introduced him to your——" and then she stopped abruptly, and for a moment they gazed at one another in woeful silence.

Then Gordon got up.

"Wait a moment," she said, sharply. "D'you mind the day that I advised you never to be without some of your office paper on your person?"

He looked at her, bewildered. What had made her think of that now?

"Why, yes," he said, "it was a very good idea, and one I've often had occasion to bless you for, Mrs. Anderson."

"Got any with you now?" she asked, casually.

"There's plenty in the car."

"Go and bring some out here, then. There's a letter I want you to write to me."

"To you?" he said, hesitatingly, thinking his ears had misled him.

"Yes, to me. It won't be for the first time, I'm thinking——"

And this was true. Since Donald Anderson had settled twenty thousand pounds on his mother, that lady had always liked to do her own business. Though Neil Gordon knew that she relied greatly on his judgment, this would not be the first time by many that she had actually dictated a business letter to herself; he always said she would have made a wonderful lawyer.

"No, indeed!" he exclaimed, becoming at once the keen professional man.

He went off, to be back in a few moments with some sheets of his office paper, and his fountain pen poised ready, in his hand.

Slowly she dictated the following letter:—

"*Tuesday Morning.*

"*My dear Mrs. Anderson,*

"*I am very sorry to hear what you tell me. But you and I have gone through all that once before. Both as Donald's friend, and as your lawyer, I say 'cheer up.' The first time it took your son a year to get going again. This time it may be two or three years. But one day he'll be as rich a man as ever he was, if his health stands the strain.*

"*Meanwhile, he'll have 'Cortachy' as his headquarters; I know he'll never hear of your parting with your home.*

"*I'm writing this letter, not dictating it, as I think it most important, from every point of view, that not a word should get out, within the next few days, concerning Donald's private affairs. . . .*"

"Now just slip this into an envelope and mark it 'Private. By hand.'"

He did so, and then she got up and took the letter out of his hand. "Thank you," she said, quietly.

As soon as Neil Gordon had gone, Mrs. Anderson turned and went into the house, straight to the room where her maid, Jean, often sat sewing of a morning, for Jean disliked the other servants.

"I've had a letter telling me Mrs. Riddell is worse," she said, abruptly, "so please order the machine. If Mr. Anderson should come before I'm back, just tell him that I'm sorry not to be here to welcome him on his birthday, but that I'll be home soon."

II.

As she stepped straight out of the lift into the charming hall of Mrs. Paradise's flat in Mayfair Mansions, Mrs. Anderson glanced round her in bewilderment. What, no staircase; then what happened when the lift went wrong? she asked herself.

No one came for a few moments, and Donald Anderson's mother looked this way and that with a sensation of painful interest.

She had expected something meretricious, maybe even a little shabby; but all round her were evidences not only of refinement and taste, but also of considerable wealth. The right wall was covered with a piece of old Flemish tapestry, the subject being Venus and Adonis, a peculiar subject, or so Mrs Anderson thought, for any woman to have chosen. But then, no doubt, this piece of tapestry had been a present from a man. On the other wall, which was tinted a deep turquoise blue, hung a fine old Dutch flower picture. Below it was a marble-topped gilt Empire console on which stood a cut-glass bowl full of fresh roses. Somehow she did not think that these roses had come from Donald.

The further end of the hall or lobby was masked by a heavy yellow velvet curtain; and at last, a stout woman, evidently the Belgian maid mentioned by Neil Gordon, emerged from behind the curtain.

"What does it please madam to want?"

The visitor took a card out of her old-fashioned card-case, and on it she wrote: "I am Donald Anderson's mother. I should so like to see you for a few moments."

"Will you pass in here?" said the maid, and she moved aside the tapestry to open, behind it, a door which gave into a long,

narrow slip of a room which induced in the visitor a strange sensation of stillness and unreality.

Each of the four windows was covered with pale rose-pink chiffon curtains through which there filtered a soft, becoming, and rather dim light. The furniture was of satin-wood, and three old Turkish rugs lay on the highly-polished floor.

Through a glazed door to the right could be seen what was evidently a tiny dining-room. There the window was open, giving, from where Mrs. Anderson stood waiting, a strange effect of almost garish daylight.

She sat down at last on one of the elegant painted chairs, and waited for what seemed a long time before the glazed door was flung open, and by far the most beautiful woman the old Scotch lady had ever seen glided into the shadowed room.

Mrs. Paradise was wearing a flesh-coloured chiffon wrapper, lined with silk of the same shade, and its floating amplitude seemed at once to hide and to emphasize the exquisite lines of her graceful figure. As she came swiftly towards her unknown guest, the wrapper flew open, disclosing what Mrs. Anderson had understood was no longer worn by the modern woman—a gossamer-looking petticoat, below which shot back and forth the wearer's small arched feet.

Donald Anderson's mother recalled the lawyer's words, those words which had seemed to escape him in spite of himself, and which, at the time, she had thought so absurd. "She doesn't look a day over twenty-five!" Grimly she told herself that Gordon had said nothing but the truth. Mrs. Paradise, at any rate in this dim light, looked like an ageless nymph rather than a mortal woman.

"Why, Mrs. Anderson?" she exclaimed, in a warm, soft voice. "This is *too* good of you!"

But there was a trace of anxious questioning on her lovely face.

"I had to come in to London to see a friend who is very ill, and so I thought I would call and see you, Mrs. Paradise. In a letter which I received from my son yesterday night, he tells me that you and he are very great friends, and—and——" somehow she could not bring out the, to her, terrible words, "that he hopes you will be his wife."

"We are indeed great friends," said the other, gently, "and I want you to know, Mrs. Anderson, that I feel greatly honoured by your son's affection. Donald is the biggest man—in every sense, I mean—that I have ever known, and oh! he is so kind!"

"He is that," said Donald Anderson's mother, shortly.

In spite of herself, she was strangely drawn to the lovely creature, while yet realizing to the full that this woman did not love her son, and never would.

"You've known each other for some time, I'm thinking?"

"Why, yes, we have indeed; though it is only lately that we've found out how fond we are of one another," said Mrs. Paradise, lightly.

She was beginning to think and hope that this oddly-dressed, severe-looking old lady had come with an olive-branch, not with a sword, in her hand.

"I think that story of 'Only mother knew' is the most touching tale of a son's devotion in the world," she went on, just a little affectedly.

Mrs. Anderson remained silent, and Mrs. Paradise, this time rather awkwardly, observed, "I've often told Donald that it's you who are the love of his life——"

The mother thought to herself, "And indeed—I should just think so!"

But she did not utter those words aloud. Instead, she said slowly, "My boy and I have lived through some very rough times together, and that makes for love, if it doesn't make for hate——"

Mrs. Paradise drew her wrapper closely round her. "I suppose it does do the one or the other," she mused.

"Whoever marries my son must make up her mind to take the rough with the smooth," went on Mrs. Anderson, grimly. "In the last twelve years Donald has twice been what he would call 'down and out.'"

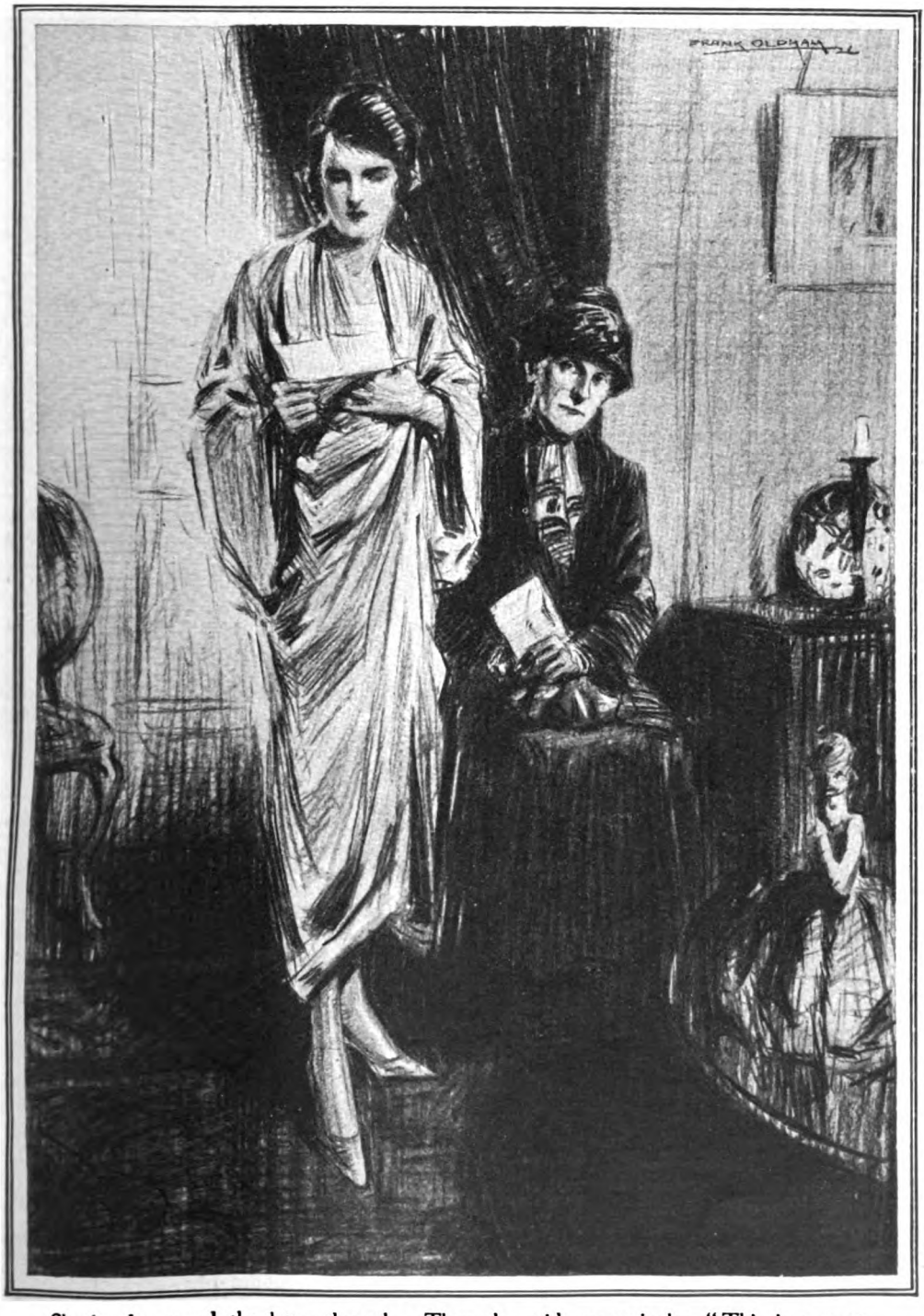
There came a look of slight discomfort over the deep violet eyes. "He's only once had a *really* bad time, surely, Mrs. Anderson? He was soon all right again, and——" Donald's mother suspected the woman who believed herself about to become Donald Anderson's wife, of the comfortable thought, "——now he's one of the richest men in England."

"He did pull up pretty quickly," said Mrs. Anderson, thoughtfully. "And no doubt he will do so again. But as time goes on, it becomes more difficult to do that, of course. Donald is thirty-eight to-day; he is no longer a youth."

"But he hasn't any need to pull up, *now*?"

There was just an edge of questioning dismay in the soft, melodious voice. "He has only to stay as he is, to be all right—hasn't he?"

Mrs. Anderson looked full into the lovely face. "If, later on, you're ever able to make Donald realize *that* fact, you'll be cleverer than I've managed to be. He's just got what I call speculation in his



Slowly she read the letter through. Then she said, quaveringly: "This is a most terrible thing, Mrs. Anderson!"

blood!" she exclaimed. "But before you start out to try to make him stay 'put,' you wait till he's built himself up again. Don't you go and discourage him while he's doing it—"

"Built himself up again?" repeated Mrs. Paradise, and now there was a touch of fear, as well as of dismayed surprise, in her tone. "I don't exactly understand what you mean by that, Mrs. Anderson."

"I thought you knew everything about Donald? Don't you know that he's been very anxious this last fortnight about the biggest deal of his whole life?"

"Why, yes, of course I know that. But surely——?" She had gone very pale under the light cloud of powder shimmering over her face.

Was it to bring her bad news that this sinister old woman had come here to-day—Donald not being man enough to come himself? Mrs. Paradise knew a great deal, a great deal too much for her own comfort, concerning men and their ways, both when they were in love, and out of love.

"I think ye ken our lawyer, Mr. Neil Gordon," murmured Mrs. Anderson.

When she was nervous, really nervous, she went back, unconsciously, to the familiar idiom of her youth.

She was feeling horribly ashamed, and yet, yes, exultant, too.

"Neil Gordon?" echoed Mrs. Anderson's hostess. The colour rushed back into her face. "Yes, I do know him, certainly."

The old woman took an envelope out of her big black silk bag.

"This is a letter Mr. Gordon wrote me this morning. It will show you how things are, better than I can explain them in a few words."

Mrs. Paradise took the letter which was written in what had once been, to her, such a welcome, eagerly looked-for, and familiar handwriting.

Slowly she read it through. Then she said quaveringly, "This is a most terrible thing, Mrs. Anderson!"

"Not terrible to anyone who knows Donald as I know my son," said Donald's mother, quietly. "In a way I've always been expecting this—since last time."

Mrs. Anderson uttered those words very sincerely, and indeed they were quite true words, for Donald Anderson was far too fond, and always would be, of taking big risks in business.

"Luckily my son has the most simple ways of any man I know," she went on. "He settled what brings in about a thousand pounds a year on me long ago, and I've been thinking, ever since this morning, that you and he will be able to live with me—or, rather, that you will be able to stay with me while he's going about building up another fortune."

THERE was a long pause, and then Mrs. Anderson leant forward. "You need not doubt but that he'll do that," she said firmly. She felt it only fair to give this lovely creature a chance.

"You're very kind," murmured Mrs. Paradise. Her mind was working so quickly that she hardly knew what it was this determined, frightening old woman had just said in so significant a tone. At last she asked, in a low, strained tone, "When are you going to see Mr. Anderson?"

Already she no longer even thought of him as "Donald."

"I'll be finding him at home *now*, and I understand he is coming to see you to-morrow."

"Don't let him do that!"

The speaker's white hands were flung out in supplication, and there were real tears in her eyes.

"Maybe 'twould be better to wait till the day after to-morrow," agreed Donald's mother. "'Twill be best indeed for him to spend to-morrow talking things over with Mr. Gordon."

"Much best," murmured the other.

Mrs. Anderson got up. "I'll be going now," she said, in a tired voice.

Mrs. Paradise accompanied her visitor to the lift and pushed the button.

"I can trust you, Mrs. Paradise, not to utter a word about this matter of Donald's trouble till it becomes public?"

"Indeed you can, Mrs. Anderson, and"—once more the lovely creature threw out both her hands in a gesture of supplication—"whatever happens you'll remember me kindly?"

Mrs. Anderson hesitated a moment. "Yes," she said, firmly, "I will always think of you kindly, Mrs. Paradise. And don't stop here now—I won't have a minute to wait."

She just glanced at the younger woman's wrapper. To her old-fashioned notions it was not the kind of garment a modest woman would care to be seen in by any man or boy—not even a lift boy.

Mrs. Paradise reddened. "Good-bye! And thank you for having come——"

As she vanished behind the heavy yellow velvet curtain there came no sound of a door shutting behind her.

A queer grating noise rose from the lift shaft, and then came a shout of—"Something's wrong!" from below.

Mrs. Anderson felt slightly irritated. She

did not want to stay on, here, in the company of the tapestried naked Venus and Adonis one moment longer than need be.

Suddenly there fell on her ears the sound of a voice—the voice of Mrs. Paradise, coming from behind the curtain. But it was strangely unlike the drawling melodious voice to which she, Mrs. Anderson, had listened in the dim rosy light of the drawing-room. That voice sounded, now, like the cooing crooning cry of a dove calling to its mate.

"That you, Bob? Could you come round here now, at once? . . . No, I can't say it over the telephone. . . ."

"Don't take it so much to heart," he said. "Of course it has knocked me out, but—but I'll get over it, never fear."

And then, after a pause, there came a light gurgle of delicious laughter.

"You silly boy! . . . Now I wonder what you'd think if I were to say 'yes'? . . . I wish I *were* an angel. . . . 'Tisn't long since you called me the other thing. . . ." In a lower, more tremulous tone, "Of course I'd like to make you the happiest chap in the whole world. . . ."

The Belgian maid came hurrying into the hall. "The lift will not march!" she said in a dramatic tone. "I have to ask madam to come through my kitchen to the staircase."

And then Mrs. Anderson heard behind the yellow velvet curtain the sudden, quick, frightened shutting of a door.

III

THAT same evening the Andersons, mother and son, went out on to the terrace together, after their simple evening meal.

They were both reserved folk, and he had not said very much to her concerning the beautiful woman he believed would soon be his wife. But he had said enough to make Mrs. Anderson ask herself, in agony, whether, after all, she had not done a wrong thing by him. She felt, even now, that yearning mother-wish to give her child what that child wants, however unreasonable the wish may be; and she realized that Donald wanted Mrs. Paradise more than he had ever wanted anything in his life.

With the tears trickling slowly down her face she thanked God that she had been allowed to overhear that little one-sided telephone talk . . .

"Why, mother! You're not crying?"

He stretched out his hand and took hers in his. "You're not so foolish as to think anything in the world could make any difference between you and me?"

"I suppose I'm an old fule——"

"Why, she's just longing to meet you and to love you! Why not have her out here, now, to-night? It's not late. I'll go and get her on the telephone——"

He came back after a few minutes, and the mother knew at once that her son was very much disturbed.

"I can't make it out! That Belgian maid of hers says that she's gone to stop with a friend in an hotel; and the stupid woman doesn't even know which hotel it is! That's too bad, isn't it, mother?"

"Why, yes, it is," she agreed.

They sat for awhile in silence. It was now quite dark. Suddenly the front door bell pealed through the silent house, and a moment later dour Jean came out on to the terrace.

"Here's a letter for you, Mr. Anderson, come by special messenger from London. The man said there was no answer."

Donald Anderson never got away long from business, and now he exclaimed, "I don't suppose it's anything particular!"

All the same, he went back into the sitting-room, and switched on the electric light.

His mother got up and followed him. Her heart was beating queerly. Somehow she felt she knew who that letter was from. When Donald Anderson saw the handwriting he tore open the envelope quickly, and then he took out of it the longest letter he had ever received from the writer.

Standing just under the light, he read it through, carefully. Then, for a while, he remained staring down at the sheets of paper, his massive figure and bent head as still as if carved in stone.

At last he turned round. He had always sought his mother in trouble, and he did so now. "Mother," he muttered, "Mother——," and then, "Read this!"

She took the scented wad of note-paper out of his hand, and this is what she read:—

"Dear Mr. Anderson,

"I don't want you to learn from anyone but myself what I've done. The French have a proverb, 'Woman often changes,' and this is to tell you that I have changed my mind since we last met.

"With a woman love comes first. I've always known that with you business came first. Bob Wickham has adored me for two years. I don't think I've been out of his mind for a single moment during the whole of that time, and to-day I promised him to become his wife as soon as it is possible to do so.

"Last time we met I was carried off my feet, but I know now that I am not only doing the best thing for myself, but the best thing for you, too.

"This brings with it a prayer for forgiveness, and thanks for much kindness from,

"ROSE PARADISE."

The three large sheets of paper fluttered to the ground; Mrs. Anderson was swaying, and what colour she had, had gone.

Her son took one frightened step towards her. "Mother!" he cried, "It isn't as bad as that——!"

He took her up in his arms and carried her upstairs. He laid her on her bed—and then, as she opened her eyes, he knelt down by her. "Don't take it so much to heart! Of course it's knocked me out, but—but I'll get over it, never fear. Why, don't you know that nothing on earth matters to me like *you*?"

"Is that true?" she asked, faintly.

"Of course it's true!"

She began to cry. "I can't bear that you should be hurt, Donald."

He got up. "Hurt? Of course I'm hurt. Damnably hurt! Neil Gordon warned me against her, and I felt like—like killing him. But he was right, mother, he was right! Still, I'd give a good deal to know who or what turned her against me?"

"Neil Gordon has never been fair to women," said Donald's mother faintly. And then she sat up, feeling better and less dizzy.

But her son still gazed at her with concern. "You do look bad!" he exclaimed. "I'd just like to have Dr. Burns round——"

"I just wouldn't see him," she murmured. "I'm all right now, really. Can you spare the time to stay quiet here for a few days, laddie?"

She knew how he'd be feeling to-morrow.

"Of course I can. I'll stay just as long as you like——"

"But how about business?"

"My big deal's through. Besides—I've always put my mother first. I've always been a Mammy's-boy, eh, mother?"

"Why, yes, you have," and then she began to sob.

He looked at her in anxious dismay. "I think I'll get a call through to Maggie," he said suddenly. "I wish she was here now."

"She's coming to-morrow, anyway," murmured Mrs. Anderson, dabbing her eyes. "That is, if you don't mind her being here with you?"

"Mind? Why should I mind? 'Twill be a great comfort to have our little Maggie back again, not only to you, mother, but to me too—if it comes to that!"

Fun and Humour in Animals

By

MARGARET STRICKLAND

Illustrated by
TOM PEDDIE

THAT animals are playful no one will deny, but that they "laugh" and enter into the fun of their games for the games' sake I have heard disputed. Whan a cat or dog runs after a ball or any other moving object, people will say it is merely their hunting instinct that is aroused; they imagine that object their prey and chase it as such. This is, undoubtedly, the case with wild creatures and, to a large extent, with domestic ones. A cat or dog will worry and "kill" inanimate things, yet knows all the time it is only a make-believe kill. They are taught this form of play in infancy by their mothers, as part of their education. "Here is a way to earn your living," she will tell them, "if you fail to find a kind master or mistress who will provide for you."

There is, likewise, a lot of play in the courtship of animals, especially birds; but, quite apart from this, I contend that a real sense of humour enters into the play of many of our dumb friends.

Animals living in their natural state have small opportunity to cultivate this sense, their time being almost entirely occupied in protecting themselves from their enemies and providing themselves and their families with food and a place of shelter. But even these creatures of the wild find some leisure for sportive recreation, and the mothers teach their young to play.

It stands to reason, then, that domesticated animals, whose board, lodging, and safety are assured, must have not only a super-abundance of energy to work off somehow, but also the time in which to develop other activities.

Humour is, of course, quite distinct from playfulness. The most savage animals indulge in play. At two months young tigers, lions, leopards, wolves, etc., begin to frisk about, run after their mother's tail and romp together. Even fish have their sportive moments. They wallow in the shallows, leap and chase one another in pure exuberance of spirits. Humour, however, is usually met with only in animals that are more or less tame and have had intercourse with humans.

I am of the opinion that, just as animals often grow to resemble their owners (or is it their owners that grow like them?) so do their characters frequently model themselves on those of the persons with whom they most associate. I maintain that the pets of a bright, jolly family, with a humorous turn of mind, will assuredly come to possess much the same happy temperament, appreciating and entering whole-heartedly into all their fun. Similarly, a silent, dour master will have an equally solemn dog, animals being essentially imitative.

Many of us teach our pets games, even as others teach them tricks, and they get to know and to follow the rules thereof; but anyone who has taken the trouble to study animals will have discovered that, in their own games, which they inaugurate themselves and play together, they have their set rules, one being that however lively their mock battles, they must not really hurt one another.

My cat, Chiggy (whose acquaintance readers of THE STRAND MAGAZINE have already made), had, in her youth, a blue Persian friend, named Zeppie, with whom she regularly played. At almost the same time each morning—for the game had to be played

early, while all doors were open—Zeppie would arrive and, after greetings had been exchanged, the game of "Hide and Seek" would begin. "Home" was behind a large arm-chair in the sitting-room, and to this chair hung a bell which I had tied there to entertain Chiggy when quite a wee kitten. They took it in turn to hide and find, the one remaining behind the chair (which blocked the view of the door and most of the room), and the other starting off, after a few seconds, always ringing the bell in passing.

The funny part was that they almost invariably hid in the same place, behind the bath, yet the seeker would come stalking along as warily as though he thought the other might spring out from any odd corner. The bath reached, there would be a tense pause, then a pounce, a merry chase round, and back, tearing along the passage to the sitting-room and "Home," the bell being rung, this time, by the hider.

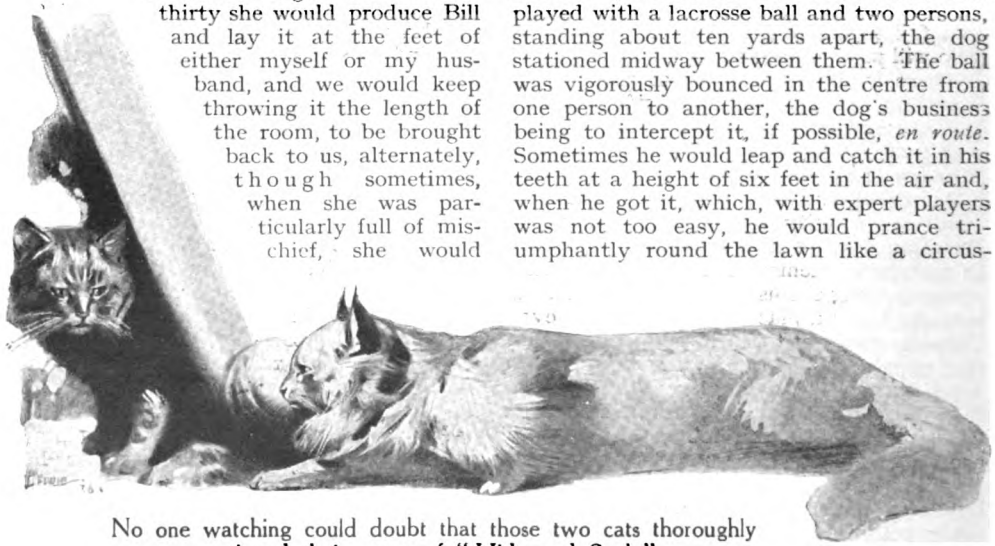
I have been a spectator of this game scores of times, without ever attempting to interfere in it, and I noticed that the rules were always strictly adhered to. It was a genuine romp, and no one watching could doubt that those two cats thoroughly enjoyed it and played for the sheer fun of it. The ringing of the bell was, obviously, the signal they had arranged for the start and finish of each round.

Chiggy played various games, one of her earliest being "Bill." Bill was a small block of wood, about an inch square, which she found and fixed on as her favourite toy. She would run about with it in her mouth, put it down for me to throw, then go dashing after it, retrieving just like a dog. Most evenings about nine-thirty she would produce Bill and lay it at the feet of either myself or my husband, and we would keep throwing it the length of the room, to be brought back to us, alternately, though sometimes, when she was particularly full of mischief, she would keep us in suspense as to which was to be the favoured one. Sometimes my husband would cry, "Come on, bring Bill!" when she would come trotting up, as though to give it to him, and then, with a coy flourish, whisk round, come leaping into my lap and deposit Bill. When she had had enough of this game she would carry Bill off and hide it under a corner of the carpet in her cattery.

But there was another game with Bill which she greatly enjoyed—a sort of "Hunt the Thimble." We would hide it, or perch it up in various places, then say, "Go seek Bill!" and as soon as she perceived it, with a smart flick of her paw, she would send it flying off as far as possible, then give chase and bring it back for us to repeat the performance.

She would sit watching, with suppressed excitement, while we balanced Bill on different objects, favourite places being the toe of my husband's boot, on his outstretched foot, the top of his head, the back of my wrist, and directly it was poised, hey, presto! off it would fly again. Once my husband made a serious *faux pas*. He put Bill between his teeth, to see if she would try her usual means of dislodging it, but the instant she saw it, her eager expression changed to one of hurt indignation. Turning her back, she walked away, declining to play any more. Here is an instance of animals resenting being laughed at. She thought he was mimicking and making fun of her, and was deeply offended.

A collie dog we had some years ago had a lively sense of humour. There was one game which he always looked for in the afternoon, when it was fine. This was played with a lacrosse ball and two persons, standing about ten yards apart, the dog stationed midway between them. The ball was vigorously bounced in the centre from one person to another, the dog's business being to intercept it, if possible, *en route*. Sometimes he would leap and catch it in his teeth at a height of six feet in the air and, when he got it, which, with expert players was not too easy, he would prance triumphantly round the lawn like a circus-



No one watching could doubt that those two cats thoroughly enjoyed their game of "Hide and Seek."

horse, giving it little tosses and casting roguish glances, as much as to say, "You'd like to have it, wouldn't you ? "

Presently, however, he would place it at the feet of one of us, so that the game could be resumed, thus showing his understanding, for, much as he loved to gain possession of the ball, that dog never infringed the rules or encroached on forbidden territory to obtain it ; also he had the sense to know that, unless he restored it to us, we should get tired of waiting and abandon the game. That he played for pure fun and excitement no one could doubt.

He showed his humour in yet another way. Every night he was put to bed on a rug under the kitchen table. In the mornings he would usually be found, still lying there, clasping to him a boot of my father's, to procure which he had to go out to the scullery and climb up to a big copper, whereon all the boots were put overnight, ready for cleaning next day. More than once we crept out at midnight, or later, hoping to catch him in the act, but never succeeded.

I am sure it was the obvious amusement it caused which made him continue the practice and lie in bed with his boot until he had been seen, because he always had such a self-conscious twinkle in his eye.

Most cats and dogs like to get hold of an old garment, belonging to their owner or best-beloved, to sleep on, and this is understandable, because clothes retain some of the personality of the wearer, besides affording warmth and comfort, but I cannot imagine a boot being a particularly " cuddlesome " bed-fellow. However, I suppose it was the best he could find.

He would leap and catch the ball in his teeth.

In his latter years the boot-act was abandoned, as he found another way of entertaining us. We noticed that he liked a pillow for his head, so his bed was provided with one ; then, seeing how properly he used it, someone suggested that he ought to be covered up and tucked in o' nights. So it gradually came about that his rug was folded to form a mattress, blanket and counterpane were contributed, and he was put to bed every evening, his head resting on the pillow, the bedclothes turned down under his chin, and looking for all the world like the wolf in Red Riding Hood ! In the mornings he would be found lying in much the same position, and when remarked upon and called a funny old thing, he would look from one person to the other, without lifting his head, in that self-conscious manner which dogs often display when being criticized and admired. He not only took a real pride in going to bed like a Christian, but saw the humour of it.

Another dog, whom I numbered amongst my intimate canine friends, was equally waggish. I had the opportunity for several weeks, one summer, of observing him when he was pressed into the daily companionship of children. They took it for granted that he was *au fait* with all their games, and it was astonishing how quickly he got to understand and enter into the spirit of them. In playing " Follow My Leader," they soon found that they got the most fun by making Laddie the leader. That he also got fun out of it was obvious. He seemed to know just what was expected of him, and would greatly amuse us by the surprise stunts he did, such as suddenly stopping short in his trot, twice encircling a bush or leaping over

some object, and always he would cast a " laughing " glance round, to see the effect.

On the beach they would play " Hide and Seek " with him. He would be bidden to stay in the hut while they hid—usually behind the near breakwater. When they sang out " Laddie ! " he would amble forth, knowing all the time where they were, but delaying the " find " so as to keep them in suspense. But the funniest part was when they stayed in the hut and he was told to hide. He would come and try to crowd under one of our deck chairs, where, being a large dog, he was perfectly visible, but, apparently, unaware of the fact. The children, to give him a chance, would pass, pretending not to see, and it was most comical to watch the anxious, almost agonized expression in his eyes as he crouched there trying to make himself as small as possible. I always thought it was a relief to him when he was " spotted " and could scramble out and be chased back to the hut.

Puppies are very droll when just beginning to stagger about. A friend was telling me about a litter of five she had recently seen, which entertained her greatly. One pup was so fat that he could only with the utmost difficulty get on to his feet at all. His more nimble brothers and sisters would sit around, watching his laborious efforts and, as soon as he was up, would deliberately push him over again, apparently deriving immense delight from the continued repetition of this performance.

Monkeys are, admittedly, the most intelligent of all animals, some of them quite uncannily so. Their humour is mostly of the mischievous order, and it is obvious in many cases that they are totally unconscious of it, for they will do the drollest things in perfect seriousness, and, when you laugh, fly into a rage. They, more than any other animals, hate to be ridiculed, being peculiarly sensitive, and their tempers so capricious that, at times, they would seem almost to border on hysteria.

The chimpanzee and orang-outang have, undoubtedly, the most sense of fun. Most Zoo visitors were acquainted with Arthur, the chimpanzee who recently died of pneumonia, and I could tell you many stories of his wonderful sagacity, but, although far more intelligent, he was, perhaps, not so humorous as Sandy, the orang, whose passion for newspapers everyone knows. It is a quaint conceit of his to wrap himself up in the papers and keep people guessing which end of him is where. But I think his most amusing " stunt " is when he steals an umbrella or lady's sunshade, for he will promptly open it and sit holding it over his head, at the same time favouring the onlookers with a comical grin. It pleases him to know he is entertaining people, and he likes to see them laugh, but they must do so becomingly. Discordant shouts or screams make him very angry.

Many years ago, in the Zoo, there was a young orang who also had many funny tricks, one of which was to put her empty feeding-tin, which was of a somewhat peculiar shape, on her head, like a bonnet ; then, with a broad smile, pose before the delighted spectators. Judging from her expression, their laughter gave her much gratification and proved that she possessed real humour. She knew she looked ludicrous and thoroughly enjoyed the mirth she caused.

In playing " Follow My Leader," the children soon found

The racoon is a most amusing fellow. Almost as mischievous and inquisitive as the monkey, he possesses more real sense of fun. Many years ago my father had one as a pet, which was allowed to live at large in the house, and endless were the pranks he got up to. One of his best jokes was to conceal himself under the dining-table and, when everyone was assembled for a meal, to startle people by nipping a foot or ankle, first on one side of the table, then the other, always skipping off as he heard the exclamation of alarm, and taking care to keep out of view. Members of the family being accustomed to most of his tricks, he reserved this one particularly for visitors,

aware, apparently, that a far more dramatic effect would thereby be produced.

If caged, the racoon gets frightfully bored and will invent all sorts of games to while away the time. Give him a piece of string and he will play " cats' cradles " with it for hours. I know of one who, if given a length of tape or, better still, coloured ribbon, will tie up his face with it, bind it round his nose and ears, until he makes himself look perfectly ridiculous, then call his owner's attention to it, just like a child who dresses up and then comes to show himself off. Mr. Coon knows he looks comic, for he has frequently inspected himself in the mirror, and he does it just for fun, because

that they got the most fun by making Laddie the leader.

he likes to hear people laugh. At other times he will sit pensively counting the rings on his tail—or so he appears to be doing, for he will touch each ring in turn and then look up, as if to say : " Five—is that correct ? "

The racoon's favourite pastime, however, is washing, and when he is in one of his mischievous moods you cannot do better than give him a bucket full of water and something to wash, an old cup, jug, or bottle, even some stones or shells, for this will keep him engrossed for hours.

It seems a pity that this quaint little beastie's passion for dabbling in water cannot be turned to some useful account. I am sure that as a scullery-maid or laundry-hand he would be in his element.

The play of weasels is the prettiest thing to watch. Once, while I was sitting on a fence in a quiet country lane, I saw a whole family, father, mother, and four young ones, disporting themselves in a field. They teased, chased, and leapt over one another just as madly as any March hare, their movements being so swift that the eye, at times, could scarcely follow them. That the old ones were leading and teaching their children was obvious, and it struck me that this must be a recognized game amongst the weasel tribe.

A white rat we had for years lived most happily in similar conditions. He possessed the same mischievous sense of fun as a racoon. Frequently, when he and his two friends, the cat and dog, had been peacefully sleeping in a bunch on the hearthrug, he would be the first to wake. Having had a wash and titivated generally, he would survey his slumbering companions with a " Now then, you lazy beggars, why don't you bestir yourselves and have a game ? " look, and this failing to have any effect, he would slyly nip the dog's ear, then dart behind the cat. The dog, with a squeal, would start up, look suspiciously at the cat, when, seeing him sound asleep, he would conclude that he had been dreaming and settle down again. The artful rat would next give a sharp bite to the cat's tail or hind leg, again skipping off out of sight, and so continue molesting them until, in despair of further repose, they would get up.

Whether this was pure mischief, or a rat's sense of humour, it is difficult to say, but one can imagine his chuckles at seeing the cat and dog casting suspicious glances at one another, knowing himself to be the culprit.

I heard of a squirrel, which lived in equally familiar relations indoors with the other animals, and this would behave in much the same teasing way, running over the dog when he was asleep, pinching his toes, tail, or ears, then leaping swiftly out of reach up on to the curtain-pole or some other safe height, whence he could look down and " laugh " at his friend's discomfiture.

Beavers, the architects of the animal world, are always so busily engaged in their work that they have little time for recreation. In captivity, however, they have been known to become very tame, gambolling and wrestling with one another and delighting to play with any object given them for the purpose, dragging it round

their cage and struggling for possession, all in the greatest good humour.

I am convinced that bears have a considerable sense of fun. Next to the monkey tribes they most nearly resemble man, inasmuch as they walk on their hind legs and use their hands much as humans do.

The behaviour of baby bears is remarkably like that of naughty little boys, and when they get into mischief their mothers correct and spank them in the proper, approved fashion. They are exceedingly playful, tussling and tumbling over one another like big furry balls, and often stand up on their hind legs and box in the jolliest manner.

I have only known one bear really well, and he was a young one, the pet of some friends of ours. We loved to be allowed to take him out for walks and play with him, and took a wicked delight in seeing him scare other children by suddenly rushing at them, as though he were going to attack them. It was only his little joke, really. Possibly it amused him to see them go screaming away.

Every visitor to the Mappin Terraces at the Zoological Gardens must be familiar with the Polar bear, Sam II. He, I am sure, thoroughly enjoys the laughter and applause he evokes when he sits up or lolls back in his easy, abandoned attitude, waving a friendly hand to them, a real jolly smile on his jolly face. He knows all about that notice on the wall, "Feeding the Polar bears is strictly prohibited"; knows that everyone will ignore it until the keeper appears and, in stentorian tones, calls attention to it, and his expression plainly says, as he swallows his last, cleverly-caught offering: "Well, well, 'tisn't my fault if they can't or won't read. I don't really want their old buns—I'm merely doing my bit in entertaining the visitors and making the Gardens popular."

It pleases him to know he is entertaining people, and he likes to see them laugh.

The bear, like the racoon, is very fond of washing things. Give him some old pots and, if there is a tub of water handy, he will find the greatest pleasure in cleaning them, standing on his hind legs and scouring them inside and out, for all the world like a practised scullion.

Young goats are very amusing. I remember stopping once, while out for a country walk with a friend, for more than half an hour to watch the frolics of two little white kids. They kept us in continual fits of laughter, so absurd were their antics. Their extraordinary jumping feats are, of course, an instinctive part of their training, goats being, naturally, mountain dwellers. That they have a sense of fun there can be no doubt. A. E. Brehm, in speaking of the chamois, gives the following remarkable account of their love of play in the snow: "They throw themselves down, in a crouching position, at the top of a steep, snow-covered incline, work all four legs, in a swimming motion, to get a start, then slide down on the surface of the snow, often traversing a distance of a hundred to a hundred and fifty metres this way, while the snow flies up and covers them with a fine powder. Arrived at the bottom they spring to their feet and slowly clamber up again the distance they have slidden down. The rest of the flock watch their sliding comrades approvingly, and one by one begin the same game. Often a chamois travels down the snow-slide two or three times or even more, several of them often coming roughly together at the bottom."

One frequently sees horses, turned out to grass, behaving in the most frisky fashion. "Touch" seems to be their favourite game. One will come prancing up, snorting and pawing the air, give

another a push, then gallop wildly off, looking round to see if the others are following. The one who catches it, in turn tears away, and so the game goes on. Sometimes they would appear to be playing "Circus," going round and round a meadow at a lively canter, tossing their heads and manes in sprightly exhilaration. Young colts often have mock fights, standing up on their hind legs and boxing one another.

A horse we had once seized hold of the groom by his waist, at the back, as he was bending down, and swung him by her mouth right up into the air, landing him on the ground some feet away. So sudden and unexpected was the action that it was difficult to tell whether it was done in fun or a spurt of temper.

Most people who have travelled the seas have witnessed the amusing frolics of dolphins, surely the most jo[illegible] of fish. The moment they perceive a liner or ship in full sail, they seem to say to their companions: "Come on! let's give 'em a show!" and they bustle along through the waves at a perfectly marvellous speed, leaping, twisting, turning somersaults—in short, giving a real variety entertainment. They know they have an audience and delight to disport themselves to the uttermost. The faster the vessel moves the more comic become their antics and the keener their enjoyment.

Whales and seals likewise indulge in wild gambols, but these are, apparently, for their own pleasure only. Unlike the dolphins, they care nothing for man's applause. The intelligence of seals is well known, and although I object, on principle, to stage-performing animals, when watching them I have not been able to deny that seals seem thoroughly to enjoy the games they are made to play. The eagerness with which they compete for possession of the ball and do their balancing tricks proves that they take a pleasure in the sport, apart from the anticipation of the reward they usually receive, in the shape of fish, after each round.

"You've lost your train! Lost your train! He! he! he!"

The play of young wolves is much like that of dogs, just as that of tiger and lion cubs resembles that of cats. All these wild beasts are frolicsome at times. Even the hyena, one of the most repulsive creatures, indulges in the most friendly gambols. When caged, hyenas will leap and roll over one another in joyous excitement, all the while keeping up an extraordinary noise, which can hardly be called a cry, as it more nearly approaches a twitter, but is expressive of intense pleasure. If tamed when young, even these beasts are capable of showing considerable attachment to the particular person who has charge of them, and jump and prance with glee when he comes near.

Pumas are, without doubt, the most humorous of the wild animals. The young ones will play with a ball and with their mother's tail, just as kittens do. W. H. Hudson, in his interesting work, "The Naturalist in La Plata," declares that the puma is always at heart a kitten, taking unmeasured delight in its frolics. It will amuse itself for hours, quite alone, "fighting mock battles or playing 'Hide and Seek' with imaginary companions, lying in wait and putting all its wonderful strategy in practice to capture a passing butterfly."

A tame puma he knew loved to have a string or handkerchief waved before him, and when one person grew tired of playing with him he was always ready for a game with the next comer.

Hudson was told the following incident

by an Englishman who was once compelled to spend the night in the open on the pampas of La Plata. There was a bright moon, and at about nine o'clock he saw four pumas approaching, two full-grown and two young ones. He was not afraid, knowing that these animals never attack men, and he quietly watched them. They chased one another, played "Hide and Seek," and presently came quite close to him, jumping directly over his motionless form several times in their merry capers.

I could mention the play characteristics of many other animals, but space will not permit. I cannot close, however, without a few words about our feathered friends. Birds display their merriment in various ways, swinging, dancing, and singing being the most usual. Although full of play, only a few can be said to possess a real sense of humour. Of these parrots and cockatoos come foremost. It *must* be humour which makes them pick out the quaintest mannerisms and phrases to imitate; moreover, their ejaculations are so apt that they cannot be due entirely to chance.

There was a parrot who lived in a house opposite some relatives of mine who imitated the voice and call of every tradesman who visited the street, and he took a fiendish delight in whistling for taxis, and then, on seeing them drive up, would break forth into derisive chuckles, to the exasperation of the cabmen. One day there was a funeral next door and it was truly disgraceful, although very funny, to hear the ribald comments he kept up the whole time on the proceedings.

I remember another parrot, belonging to a friend of mine, who was just such another mischievous jester. A great many people passed the house on the way to the railway station, and frequently when he saw a person in a hurry, knowing, apparently, that every moment was precious, he would suddenly call out, "Hi! you've dropped something!" which would usually entail a halt and a frantic look round, perhaps retraced steps. The parrot would then give an exact imitation of the whistle of the train leaving the station, and the consternation of his victim would be met with a cackling laugh and jeering, "You've lost your train! Lost your train! He! he! he!"

On Saturday afternoons vast crowds would pass on their way to the football ground, and the parrot would sometimes create quite a panic by yelling, "Pickpocket! Whoa! Stop him!" then snigger to himself at the confusion that ensued. Who had taught this bird no one seemed to know, but his wit and intelligence were absolutely uncanny.

Magpies and jackdaws are as full of mischievous play and mimicry as monkeys, and possess a sense of humour almost equal to parrots.

Cranes, which are exceptionally clever birds, seem to find pleasure in all sorts of droll capers. They will amuse themselves for hours practising juggling feats, picking up pieces of wood, or any other small objects they can find, tossing them up in the air and dexterously catching them in their beaks. But their chief amusement is dancing. They prance and leap, spread their wings, tripping hither and thither with all the grace of a ballet-dancer, joyous delight in every action. Only let them have music for their Terpsichorean efforts and they will be completely happy.

Cranes find pleasure in all sorts of droll capers, but their chief amusement is dancing.

With the majority of the feathered community such exhibitions can mostly be attributed to sexual instinct, the desire to "show off" before the chosen one at pairing time; but anyone watching the crane can well believe that he dances purely for his own pleasure and feeling of well-being. If he does not possess actual humour, he at any rate has a rare capacity for fun and enjoyment.

Time to Think

By

ARNOLD BENNETT

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

I.

A LARGE car stopped outside one of the narrow entrances (Nos. 172-216) to a very large block of very small flats near Chelsea Bridge. The chauffeur got swiftly out and opened the door of the car, and at precisely the same moment an extremely beautiful girl, dressed richly in white satin, with tulle and certain blossoms which indicate the imminence of a certain ceremony, tripped down the narrow, steep, curving stone steps from an upper storey of the block and, bending her head, stepped into the car and laughed lightly; and the chauffeur shut the door on her laugh, and the car shot away towards the West-end, where it belonged.

A triumph of accurate organization, for a girl in Enid Ledburn's situation, to vanish from a building occupied by several hundreds of persons passionately curious concerning the private affairs of their neighbours, without arousing the least interest! Such a triumph could only have been accomplished by individuals who knew how to keep themselves to themselves and who were thoroughly accustomed to the idea and the discipline of time.

"Alf, you're wonderful!" said the girl.

There was a man in the car, a man of

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about thirty-eight years, fifteen years older than the girl. Enid was referring to Alf's clothes, which were undeniably wonderful, from the Malmaison in the buttonhole and the white slip in the waistcoat to the white spats over the patent-leather boots and the podgy white gloves at the end of the long arms. Alfred Ledburn indeed was more than wonderful ; he was rather too wonderful. Alfred looked just like a shop-walker at Prim's Stores, arrayed even more superbly than usual for a special occasion. And this was not surprising, for Alfred was in fact a shop-walker at Prim's renowned stores, arrayed for a special occasion.

" Did Val want to pay for them ? " the girl asked.

" He did, but of course I wouldn't have it."

" I told him you never would," said the girl in a firm tone.

" To tell you the truth, girlie, the under-manager of the men's department's a friend of mine, and he fixed me at a special discount, and it's all as good as there is. And what's more, he thinks he can take the suit back if it's pressed properly. You look a bit of all right."

" Oh, I'm all right ! " the girl agreed, with confident conviction.

And she in fact was, being a saleswoman at Karkeek's, one of the most fashionable firms for women's attire in Regent Street, an establishment not one-twentieth of the size of Prim's, but twenty times smarter and more exclusive.

" Of course, Val will have the bills for this lot," said the girl, smiling contentedly.

" Naturally." A pause. Alfred looked at his watch. " We're in good time—and not too early."

They were. And this was not surprising either, for both brother and sister had had to " clock in " of a morning and " clock out " of an evening for years.

" This his best car or his second best ? " Alfred asked.

" Well, which do you think it is ? "

" If it's his second best the best must be some car."

" It's neither. It's mine. It's one of his presents. He only told me last night at the Savoy."

Mr. Alfred Ledburn merely raised his eyebrows and whistled.

At two-thirty precisely by the clock in the tower of the church of St. Agnes, Mr. Alfred Ledburn handed his sister out of the car, and arm-in-arm they passed over red cloth, under a striped awning, between two thick walls of people addicted to the spectacle of the greatest of all human institutions, into the fashionable fane. Enid's extraordinary exquisite dark beauty—what large glittering eyes, what black eyelashes and eyebrows, what curves of the lip !—caused necks to crane, and mouths to open and even to ejaculate words of amazement. But both Alfred and Enid were thoroughly used to the public gaze ; Alfred addressed thousands of strangers, and Enid some scores or hundreds, every week. Their deportment on the red cloth was perfect in ease and correctness. The Press photographers, victims of routine, saved their plates for the ceremonial exit of bride and bridegroom, and foolishly ignored the brother and sister.

II.

ALMOST at the same moment as Enid's wedding car was leaving the neighbourhood of Chelsea Bridge another car was leaving a house in Hyde Park Gardens. It held two men, Mr. Valentine Porter, of the same age as Alfred Ledburn, and his brother Rudolph, a little the senior of Enid Ledburn.

" I hope she won't keep us waiting. They generally do," said young Rudolph, full of the worries of a best man.

" She will not," replied his elder. " She won't keep us waiting at all. On the other hand, she won't make us look awkward by getting there first."

" Why, she's unique, then ! "

" Well, she is. And if you'd left New York last month as you said you would you'd have had more opportunities of judging her. Have you got the ring in your pocket ? "

" What a question ! Many men have been killed at dawn for a less insult than that."

" Sorry ! "

" If you want to know, I've got two rings, one in each pocket. Do you suppose I've never been a best man before ? "

" You'll like Enid," said the bridegroom.

" I *do* like her, you idiot."

" You'll like her more and more. She'll appeal to you. She's so practical. She thinks of everything. She's never at a loss."

" You call her practical. I should call her lovely."

" She's the most beautiful girl in London."

" Well, there are lots of girls in London, but I shouldn't be surprised if she is."

" She *is*. Everybody says so. But if she hadn't had character, do you suppose I should have looked twice at her ? "

" Yes, I do suppose you'd have looked twice at her."

" I shouldn't have married her, anyway."

" You said you met her first in the shop ? "

" Yes. I happened to go in there with Rebecca. What a bit of luck ! You know,

sonnie, those shop people know a thing or two about things. It's a terrific education being in a shop. And if it's a good shop like Karkeek's, they learn style. Enid would be equal to anything."

"She'll have her work cut out, being the mistress of your modest establishment."

"In a month she'll be doing it as well as the mater ever did. She'll go slow at first. She'll watch and she'll keep her mouth shut until she's got the hang of it. And then she'll act. You'll see. I haven't the slightest fear. It isn't as if I didn't know what marriage is and what women are. Some women can't rise. Some women are born to rise. She's one of the born. And I thank Heaven she's not passionate."

"Isn't she? I should have thought she was."

"Well, you're wrong. She isn't temperamental, and I'm glad."

At two-twenty-eight precisely the car stopped gracefully before the porch of the church of St. Agnes. The brothers descended on to the red cloth. The head verger was excessively deferential. In thirty years of professional marrying he had never known such glorious and expensive floral decorations as Mr. Valentine Porter had caused to be provided; and his expectations about tips were enormous.

"I 'ear there's to be no bridesmaids," said a disappointed voice in the crowd.

"She wouldn't have bridesmaids at any price," Val murmured to Rudolph. "She was right."

The brothers walked nervously up the centre aisle of the church, crowded with well-dressed and other persons who had been drawn partly by friendship for the contracting parties, partly by the rumours of a highly romantic marriage, and partly by the rumours of the bride's astonishing beauty. The brothers came to a halt near the altar, within whose railings stood one young clergyman. Then the organ began to breathe o'er Eden, and looking round the brothers saw the dazzling advent of the self-possessed bride and her majestic brother.

III.

IN the back or more recondite parts of the church—and chiefly in the vestry—there was a certain excitement, for the Reverend Johns Marjoribank Banks, rector of the parish of St. Agnes, and chief officiator at the wedding of Valentine George Joachim Porter, member of the Stock Exchange, and Enid Ledburn, spinster, had not appeared. Only his surplice was present. Odd and nondescript people get into vestries on the days of fashionable weddings—friends of the clergy, of the organist, of the choirmaster, and privileged friends of the parties, in addition to minor functionaries of the church itself. All these persons were now becoming feverish, with a tendency to lose their heads. The vestry telephone was working. The vestry clock ticked disturbingly onwards into the future. The sole soothing influence was that of the distant organ. Excuse, however, might well be made for everybody concerned, for assuredly the failure of the rector to arrive punctually for a ceremony so important was utterly unprecedented.

At length—twenty-three minutes to three—the Reverend George Fitch entered the vestry, having quitted his post behind the altar railings; and his departure from the sight of the contracting parties and the crowded congregation produced a commotion in the church even surpassing the commotion in the vestry. A hum of talk arose, and the contracting parties actually spoke to each other—before the commencement of the ceremony—a thing hitherto unknown in the history of marriage-celebration in the Church of England.

"The rector isn't here," explained a sidesman to Mr. Fitch.

"Not here! Impossible!" Mr. Fitch was a tall and vigorous curate, neither dark nor fair, with hazel eyes and a sincere, persuasive manner.

"And we can't get an answer on the telephone, either."

"I'll run round to the rectory myself and see if the rector is unwell or anything," said Mr. Fitch. "I can be back in six minutes, and if necessary I can perform the ceremony myself. It will not be quite the same thing, but it will be just as binding."

He threw off his surplice, seized his broad-brim and almost ran out.

Relief! The rectory was but two minutes distant in Upper Pulteney Street. Then gradually, as the vestry clock ticked on, tension again; tension turning to horror! The verger himself invaded the vestry, gave terrible accounts of the state of affairs in the church, and demanded advice as to the management of hysterical crowds. Someone followed the curate to the rectory, and returned with the news that neither the rector nor the curate was to be found. Somebody else telephoned to the rector's churchwarden, who arrived at eight minutes to three and, confronted by a unique situation, proved singularly unhelpful. Urgent messages of distress were dispatched for other parsons, as for doctors in a dreadful extremity, but, like doctors, the other parsons were out. By this time the best man had visited the vestry thrice and the bridegroom once.

And then a frightful thing occurred. The great clock of St. Agnes struck three. Now

it is well known, and everybody knew, that for some reason, completely baffling to the reason of mankind, no marriage can be celebrated in England after the hour of

"But I doubt if I can get off to-morrow," said her brother, for whose convenience the ceremony had been fixed as late as two-thirty that day.

three o'clock in the afternoon. In the coarse phrase of the verger, the milk was spilt.

News of the calamity spread with fantastic speed. Even the journalists present got hold of it, and scurried away to the offices of their newspapers. The state of the congregation was really alarming—made up as it was of fever, sympathy, resentment, a horrid, inexplicable human joy in the misfortunes of others, and pride at having assisted at a very remarkable event. People spoke of the ruined reception at Claridge's, the unusable seats booked in honeymoon trains, the unluckiness of the mishap, the decadence of the Church of England, and the awful predicament of the poor bride. But the bride was the most composed person in the multitude. For composure she beat the bridegroom easily.

She remarked, calmly :—

"Never mind. It means only a delay of twenty-four hours. Less. Because we can be married at nine o'clock to-morrow."

IV.

THE Reverend Johns Marjoribank Banks lived in a house which was like all the other houses in his street : a costly house, with window-boxes of flowers, a sun-cloth over the front-door, a basement, a butler, several other servants, innumerable stairs, no lift, no central heating, two bathrooms, and a wine-cellar. Mr. Banks enjoyed a stipend of over two thousand a year for spiritually guiding the expensive souls of his wealthy parishioners, and his wife, Lady Sylvia, had considerable money of her own. So that they were able by strict economy to make both ends meet in a showy, earthy world.

Mr. Valentine Porter, severe, was talking to the butler in the narrow hall.

"The fact is, sir, that as soon as Mr. Banks had left for the church, knowing that I should not be wanted for at least half an hour, I stepped out to see some of the wedding myself, having noticed a portrait

of your bride-to-be in the paper this morning. You can see the front of the church from the windows here, and I have no doubt that the maids were leaning out of the top-floor window. Perhaps that explains why the telephone was not answered."

"The rector left in the ordinary way for the church?"

"Not quite the ordinary way, sir. He left earlier than I expected. Consequently I was not in the hall to give him his hat."

"But when Mr. Fitch came to fetch him, who opened the door for Mr. Fitch?"

"Mr. Fitch has a latchkey, sir."

"Then no one saw him?"

"I think not, sir. But I've told the police all this, sir."

"Quite. But now you're telling me."

"Yes, sir."

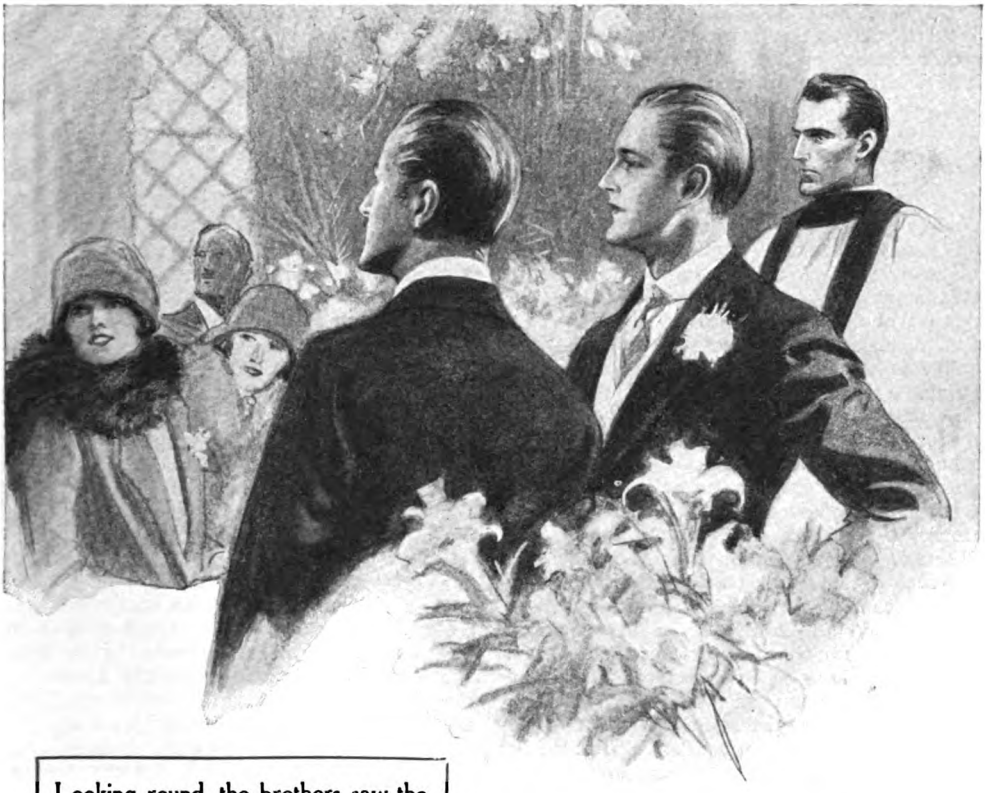
"And you've not seen or heard anything of either the rector or the curate since?"

"No, sir."

"Where is Lady Sylvia?"

"Her ladyship has been away for some days, sir, on a little motor tour."

At this moment a taxi stopped in front of the house, and the butler, neglecting



Looking round, the brothers saw the dazzling advent of the self-possessed bride and her majestic brother.

Mr. Valentine Porter, rushed to open the door.

"What's happened, Roberts?" said the rector sharply, stepping in and snatching up a telegram that lay on the hall table.

He was a ruddy, grey-haired, slim man of fifty, with a countenance habituated to authoritative cheerfulness.

"Er—this is Mr. Valentine Porter, sir," replied the butler, cautiously.

"Ah!" the rector greeted Val. "The bridegroom. Yes. I hope everything passed off smoothly. I hope that my curate Fitch officiated to your satisfaction, Mr. Porter."

The rector then heard the truth in the clear, masterful, not quite inoffensive tones of Mr. Porter.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the rector, calm but shocked. "How dreadful! How dreadful! Really, Mr. Porter, I cannot sufficiently—I cannot sufficiently—— Be good enough to step this way." And he led Mr. Porter to the back room on the ground floor. The marrier and the unmarried began

to talk, coldly, politely, with much admirable restraint. The clock on the mantelpiece struck five.

"Do you mean to say that you haven't seen the newspaper posters?"

"I have not," said the rector.

"'Strange disappearance of a London rector and his curate.' 'Hitch at a fashionable wedding.' And so on!"

"No."

"Nor seen the police either?"

"I saw the police at Leytonstone."

"At Leytonstone? Why Leytonstone?" Mr. Porter sprang deplorably from his chair.

"Let me explain," said the rector, with tranquillity well maintained. "I was in this room at a quarter-past two this afternoon when the telephone rang. You see the telephone." The rector pointed. "The call was from the police-station at Leytonstone. They said that my wife, Lady Sylvia, had had a very serious accident with her motor in the Lea Bridge Road, and that I had better come at once. My curate, Fitch, was waiting for me in the hall. I told him what had happened, and gave him instructions to perform the ceremony in my absence. We went out together, he put me into a taxi, and I went off instantly to Leytonstone. At the police-station there they denied all knowledge of any accident and assured me that they had not telephoned to me. I thought I must have heard the name wrongly on the telephone. They made various inquiries by telephone, with no result. And after a fruitless search in the Lea Bridge Road I came back home."

"A hoax, then?"

"Certainly. Here is a telegram replying to one I sent to my wife from Leytonstone. She is safe at Winchester."

"But Mr. Fitch told them nothing of this at the church," said Mr. Porter, quite ignoring the glad tidings about Lady Sylvia's safety. "When you didn't arrive he said he would fetch you himself, and since then he's missing."

"It is all most disconcerting. No doubt Fitch lost his head through nervousness at the prospect of having to conduct the ceremony."

"Where does Mr. Fitch live?"

"He has a bedroom here. You see, the Church of England provides very inadequately for her curates, very inadequately, I regret to say, and as a convenience to both of us, and to save him expense, I give him a bedroom upstairs."

"He may be there now!"

Mr. Banks rang the bell. But Mr. Fitch was not in his bedroom, nor anywhere in the rectory.

Both the rector and the still prospective bridegroom were philosophers and had a proper sense of the true relative proportions of things. They therefore arranged the most important matter first: a marriage at ten o'clock the next morning. The rector masterfully charged the bridegroom with all his excuses, sympathies, and condolences to the bride-elect. And at last the police themselves discovered Mr. Banks.

That evening Valentine took Enid to the dinner-dance at the Berkeley Restaurant. And he was very gentle and apologetic. They were not recognized.

"My dearest," he said to her, gently, apologetically, but passionately, "you don't suspect that anybody had any reason for trying to prevent our marriage to-day? Anybody who—er——"

"Not so far as I'm aware, darling," Enid answered placidly. "But of course you can never be sure. More people know me than I know. And I'm so beautiful. Well, I am, aren't I?"

Val thoughtfully agreed, drove her to her flat, where naturally she insisted on spending the night; then he proceeded for the third time that day to Scotland Yard.

V.

THE frustrated bridegroom had scarcely had time to drive away before Enid heard a knock at her little front-door on the fourth storey of the block. She thought that Val had returned for a last kiss or something less valuable; but the tall form of Mr. George Fitch (curate, though not now in clerical attire) stood in the doorway. There was a silence.

"May I come in?"

Another silence.

"I suppose so."

Mr. Fitch went in. Enid opened another door, and murmured:—

"I've got another visitor, Lizzie."

"Oh!" came the low, startled cry of a girl who had been about to enter the tiny sitting-room in a state of undress. Then more composedly: "All right!"

Lizzie was the friend and colleague with whom Enid had been sharing the flat. The frustrated bride shut the door again.

"Sit down, please."

Mr. Fitch sat down, and dropped his hat, which Enid picked up. Mr. Fitch, though he entirely lacked the traditional curate's accent, had a considerable flow of words, and he was soon in full spate.

"Yes," he said, after a few preliminaries. "At first it was deliberate on my part. I did arrange for Mr. Banks to be called away urgently to Leytonstone—on false pretences. Then I repented. In fact, I was in

a desperate state of funk because of what I'd done, and I determined that after all I must perform the ceremony myself. But when I saw you and *that man*——"

"What man?"

"Mr. Porter."

"If you meant Mr. Porter, why not have said Mr. Porter?"

"Sorry. When I saw you and Mr. Porter standing together at the altar-rails, I knew that I could never bring myself to marry you to him. Never! I simply couldn't do it. And so I ran away. I've been in the parks most of the afternoon and evening, wondering what I ought to do. I decided that I ought to come to you. So I hung about here until Mr. Porter had brought you home and gone again."

"I was sure all the time that you were at the bottom of it all. I must say you make it all sound very ordinary. I expect you think you've done nothing to be ashamed of?"

SARCASM was in her tone, and a troubled fire in her eyes. This was not the placid, lovely girl that Val Porter knew, but a passionate, feverish, lovely creature apparently capable of fearful deeds. She looked magnificent in the plain and simple dinner-frock which had been in her valise for use that evening in an hotel. Her main trunks were awaiting further events at Victoria.

"No. Nothing."

"And why did you do it?"

"I did it because I wanted to give you time to think."

"Think what?"

"Think about what you're letting yourself in for. You don't love Mr. Porter. He loves *you*, in his way, tremendously, no doubt. But you don't love him."

"How do you know that?"

"From the way you stood and looked at him now and then in church. He's dazzled you with jewels and presents and things, and flattery and adoration. He's swept you clean off your feet. And you're marrying him for money. You have beauty and you're selling it to him—no doubt at a very high price. It's a commercial transaction, that's what it is. I wanted you to realize this."

"Very kind, I'm sure," said Enid, with voice shaking. "And why are *you* so interested in my private affairs?"

"Well, I knew your father and mother. I've known you ever since you went to school, and you're perfectly aware that I've always been very interested in your private affairs. Otherwise, how did you guess just now that I was 'at the bottom of it all'?"

"I must say I think you're very impertinent, Mr. Fitch. And what's more, you're quite wrong about Val. I do love Val—very much, and that's the only reason why I'm marrying him."

"That," said Mr. Fitch, "is a lie. I know it's a lie, and you know it's a lie. You do not love Mr. Porter. A girl like you couldn't."

Tears—whether of rage or of fear—glittered in Enid's great eyes. Her mouth worked, but nothing articulate issued from her lips.

Mr. Fitch continued:—

"You'll soon be unhappy. In the end you'll be very unhappy. You're going exactly the way to ruin your life, all because you can't resist the temptation of luxury and the lure of being idolized by a handsome man."

"And so you think it would be better for me to keep on at Karkeek's and work ten and sometimes twelve hours a day in the season, and be always soothing and flattering and kotowing to women better off than I am and not half so good-looking, in a stuffy shop and trying-on rooms, and all for a miserable salary, and walk with girls in parks on Sundays, and get old and dried up instead of being the mistress of a beautiful house and wearing lovely frocks and jewellery and driving about in a motor, and going to restaurants and theatres and balls and being adored by a man who thinks all the time of nothing but me. That's what you think, is it?" demanded Enid, taking no notice whatever of the curate's assertion that she was a liar.

"Yes, I do," Mr. Fitch replied, boldly. "I mean I think anything would be better than marrying a man you don't really care for and couldn't care for. But I see no reason why not marrying him should mean that you'd be compelled to do all the unpleasant things you've just mentioned. For instance, walking about in parks on Sundays with only girls. You might walk about in parks with me, for instance."

"Why," she ironically protested, "Sunday's your busy day."

"It won't be in future," he said. "I shall have to leave the church. Mr. Banks will dismiss me, of course, and I sha'n't get another curacy. And I'm rather glad about that because I ought never to have gone into the church. The church isn't my line."

"And what is your line, may I inquire?"

"You're my line," said the curate. "And you're a million times too glorious for a curate's wife."

"What?" Enid cried. "*Me*—your line!"

"Yes," Mr. Fitch courageously insisted. "You—my line! If curates got salaries of ten thousand a year and drove about their business in cars, I should have married you some years ago. So far as I'm concerned, what's put you off is not *me*, but my being a curate with an income of fourpence halfpenny per annum. Indeed you rather like *me*, and if your head had given your heart only half a chance you'd have liked me very much. Even now you think I'm good-looking and have charm. I don't say that I'm good-looking and have charm; all I say is that you think I have."

Miss Ledburn flamed and stood up. And in her speechless wrath she was a marvellous sight—a sight, however, which Mr. Val Porter, accustomed to placidity, would scarcely have recognized. She still could not speak, and so she gave a loud, passionate scream, which must have been heard in the flat below, the flat above, and at least four other adjacent flats. On the part of a woman whose success in life had depended so much upon self-control and perfect tact, it was a surprising exhibition. Mr. Fitch was at a loss; for he had unloosed mysterious forces which he could not direct.

THE next moment the door of the bedroom flew open, and there appeared Enid's friend Lizzie, well and resplendently covered in a negligée which formed part of Enid's trousseau and had been intended for the delectation of Mr. Val Porter. Lizzie's hair was not "down" because it was shingled—proof of the practical value of shingling in the supreme crises of existence. Lizzie was a fair and plain undistinguished girl—her interests and those of Enid did not clash—and her arrival set off to still greater advantage the distinction and the dark beauty of her companion.

Enid glanced at Lizzie and then sank back into her chair and sobbed.

Lizzie did not quite know what to do or say.

"Good evening," said Mr. Fitch. "My name is Fitch, and I'm an old friend of Miss Ledburn's."

Lizzie stooped and put an arm round Enid's lovely neck, and Enid continued to shake herself with sobs.

"What is it, darling? What is it?" murmured Lizzie.

"He's—he's——" More sobs.

"I think you'd better go," said Lizzie wisely to Mr. Fitch. "I don't know what you've been doing to Miss Ledburn, but you'd best hook it, and quick."

"I shall not hook it," replied Mr. Fitch, "until I have finished my chat with Miss Ledburn."

"'Chat!'" repeated Lizzie, scornfully. "If you call this sort of thing 'chatting'—— Will you go, or not?"

"Not!"

"Then you're no gentleman," said Lizzie with conviction and brutality. "Any gentleman who won't leave a lady's flat when he's asked to is a cad, and that's all there is to it."

Enid sat up straight, suddenly ceasing to sob.

"He isn't a cad," she assented vehemently, freeing herself from Lizzie's arm.

Lizzie also straightened herself. She looked around, and a new, comprehending expression came into her eyes.

"My mistake!" she snapped, sniffing. "Seems to me I'm one too many here."

And she marched back into the bedroom and banged the door. An intense silence followed.

The two enemies, the injurer and the injured, were again alone together in the small, mean, neat, feminine room. Both were breathing hard. Enid wiped her wondrous eyes.

"What else do you want to say?" she grievously inquired.

"Nothing, really," Mr. Fitch confessed. "I've told you all I had to tell you. I may perhaps add that I've done you no harm. I've not compromised you, or interfered with your new plans. You can be married to your Mr. Porter to-morrow morning just the same. And I hope you'll be happy. I mean it, honestly. But I had to give you time to think. I had to warn you. I'll go."

"Well," said Enid, calm now, "you *had* better get away. You'll have the police after you."

"Why shall I have the police after me? I've done nothing that's against the law, and I can look any policeman in the face. Good-bye. And I'm sorry." He did not hold out his hand.

"What are you thinking of doing for a living?"

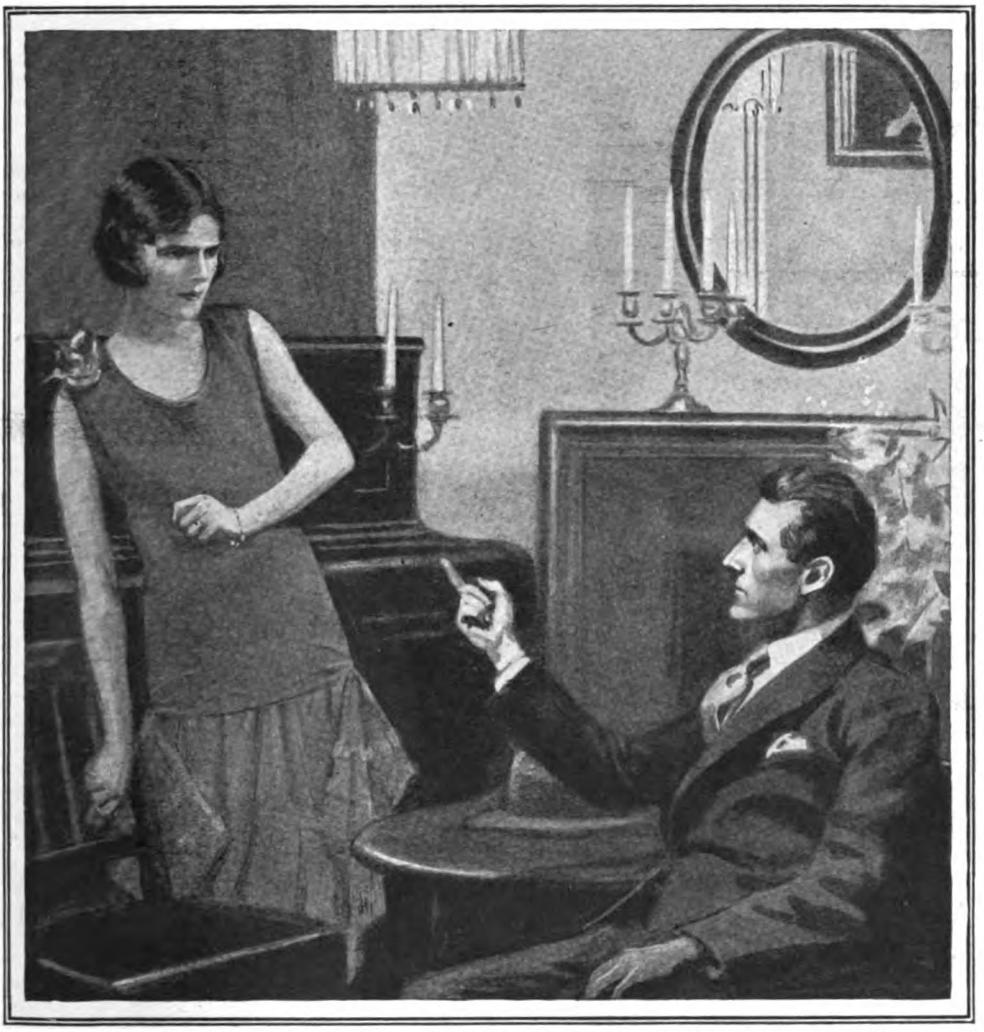
"What's that got to do with you, please?"

"Nothing. Only you seem to have ruined yourself by this day's work."

Mr. Fitch laughed easily.

"Not a bit of it!" said he. "I can make a living somehow. There's more than one string to my bow. And I don't mind saying that if I'd been given the chance I could make a living for you too."

"I don't want anyone to make a living



"That," said Mr. Fitch, "is a lie. You do not love Mr. Porter. A girl like you couldn't."

for me," said Enid with independence. "I can make my own, always have done. And if I tried I dare say I could make your living too. That would put the boot on the other leg, wouldn't it?"

"Enid!"

"I'm afraid of you."

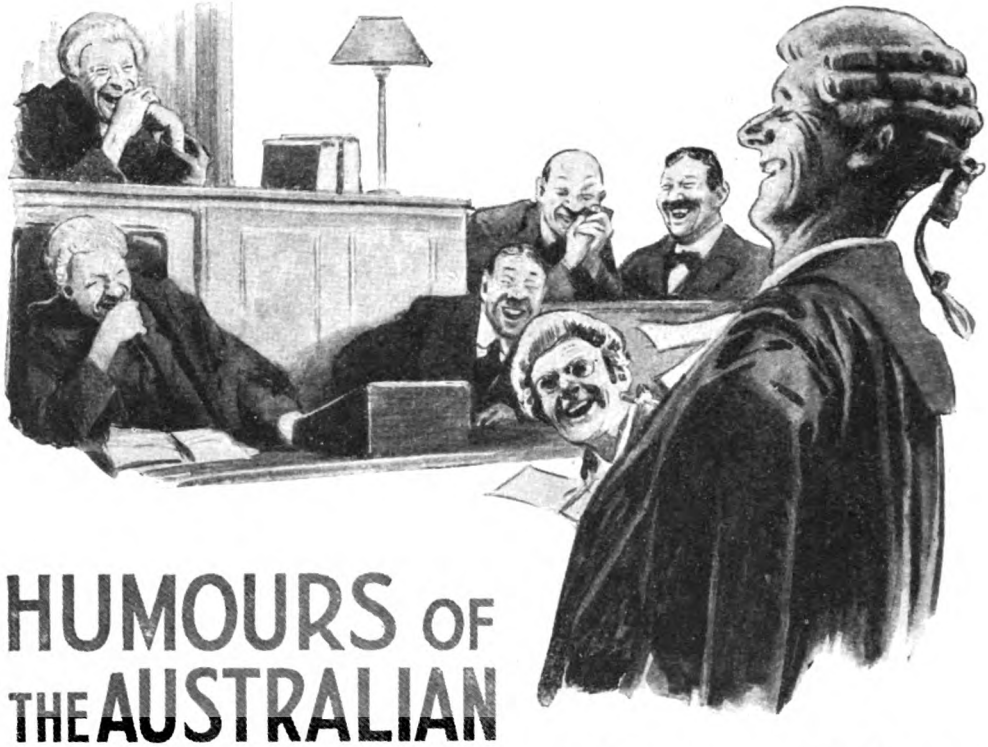
"Why?"

"A man who'd do what you've done today would stick at nothing."

"Enid!"

Mr. Fitch began to stroll towards her round the table which separated them.

THE verger of St. Agnes lost his tips. The floral decoration of the church was wasted. The Rev. Johns Marjoribank Banks had to seek another curate. Karkeek's welcomed back its unique Miss Ledburn. Mr. Valentine Porter was badly, even scurvily, treated. He had committed no crime, except that of being wealthy, generous, and furiously in love. And yet he was humiliated and robbed of an unparalleled treasure, and nobody felt very sorry for him. The world is unfair. However, he got all the presents back—including the car.



HUMOURS OF THE AUSTRALIAN LAW COURTS

by Sydney Elliott

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

A GOOD deal has been written on the subject of the humours of the Law, but the matter for such articles has been almost exclusively garnered from British or American fields. The following incidents, collected by the writer during a twenty years' professional experience in Australia, may therefore prove of novel interest.

A certain Australian County Court judge was noted both for the severity of his sentences and for the plausibility of his manner. On one occasion an elderly offender was convicted before him and promptly sentenced to fifteen years' "hard." The prisoner was aghast. "Your Honour," he quavered, "I'm an old man, and I can't possibly live it through!" His Honour was quite equal to the occasion. "My good man," he replied, soothingly, "the Law requires no one to do impossibilities. I can only ask you to do your best!"

The late Mr. Justice Simpson, for many years the chief Divorce Judge of New South Wales, had a very lively sense of the importance of his position. In the course of a celebrated divorce case tried before him once, the late Cardinal Moran was a witness. His name was called at a few minutes to one o'clock, the Court habitually adjourning for lunch at that hour. There was no reply, the Cardinal having left under the impression that no further witnesses would be required before the adjournment. Judge Simpson leaned forward and, tapping his desk, addressed the counsel whose witness the errant Cardinal was: "The witness doubtless presumes on his position," he said. "Have him here, Mr. Blank, within ten minutes, or, Cardinal or no Cardinal, I will

commit him for contempt." It sounded like Henry VIII. fulminating against Wolsey, and was so impressively effective that a very breathless Cardinal presently hurried into the box, just as the one o'clock gun boomed the hour from the neighbouring battery. "The Court will now adjourn for lunch," impassively remarked his Honour, and retired, leaving an astonished and disgruntled churchman "in the air," so to speak.

A few years later, by the irony of fate, Sir Frederick Darley, the Chief Justice of the State, had himself to appear before Mr. Justice Simpson. After the usual preliminaries, Sir Frederick was asked some questions relative to the case, and proved a singularly bad witness. "In my opinion," he said, "—er—that is—I believe that——" "You believe, sir!" thundered the Judge. "What has the Court to do with your beliefs or your opinions? We want facts, sir—and you ought to know it!" "The Chief" never pardoned his junior for that outburst, and, indeed, it was not easy to forgive.

Sir Frederick Darley was the embodiment of dignity, and looked a splendid figure in his official robes. It was, therefore, all the more amusing when a witness on one occasion, after excusing certain of his actions by stating that he was "a little under the weather," turned to his Honour and added, almost confidentially: "You know 'ow it is yourself, sir, when you get that way!"

An embarrassing incident once happened to a lady of the writer's acquaintance in connection with one of the judges of another State. She had been in Court and, speaking to the Judge (whom she knew only slightly) as he was leaving for lunch, asked him several questions about the occupants and the procedure. "And who is that ugly little man," she said, "who sat just in front of you?" The Judge paused a moment. "My associate, madam," he said, briefly; and added, as he disappeared into his room, "and my eldest son!"

TURNING from the Bench to the Bar, the name of the late Sir George Reid, K.C. (afterwards High Commissioner for Australia), at once arises in the memory. Though his reputation for wit is based rather on his political than his forensic activities, several "good things" are associated with his career at the Bar. Sir George's repartee was often of a personal nature, reflecting in some way upon the appearance of his victim. Thus, to a counsel of rather unprepossessing appearance who, during the course of a wordy warfare, interposed the remark: "At any rate, I am not two-faced" (referring to Sir George's extraordinary "yes-no" attitude upon the Constitution Bill, then before the country), the K.C. retorted, promptly: "That's evident; for, if you were, you surely wouldn't come into Court wearing that one!"

Another story of Sir George Reid again illustrates this peculiarly personal nature of his witticisms. He was defending in a criminal case, and the leader on the other side was an old, enfeebled, palsy-shaken barrister, whose retention in his position of Crown Prosecutor had long been a matter of perplexed public comment. Sir George propounded some question to a witness which the Crown took exception to. The ancient C.P. started, tremblingly, to his feet; but he had barely uttered the words "I object, y'r Honour!" when Sir George turned on him. "And *I* object, your Honour! I object most strongly to the persecution of my client by this sleuth-hound of the law!" There was a perfect shout of laughter from the Court; for anything less sleuth-like than the opposing counsel it would be hard to imagine.

There was another K.C. of the Australian Bar about this time whose chief peculiarity was an inordinate affection for long words. Briefed on a Land Resumption case once, he had addressed the Court on the merits and demerits of certain soils, making great usage of his pet methods in doing so. When he sat down, counsel for the other side started his reply gravely in this fashion: "I can only admire, but never hope to emulate, the sesquipedalian phraseology and terminological exuberancy with which my friend——" But at this point the general hilarity stopped him and it was some time before he could proceed.

This same K.C., once addressing the somewhat illiterate complainant in a "wrongful dismissal" case, put to him the following question: "Do you seriously tell the Court, sir, that your employers, altogether lacking cogent reason, peremptorily put a period to your engagement?" To this poser the witness could only scratch his head in embarrassment. Counsel repeated the question with a few addenda; but the witness still failed to comprehend. Then uprose the plaintiff's counsel—a barrister of Irish birth—and gravely translated: "The gintleman is asking ye, Mr. Smith, *did ye git the sack?*"

This Irish barrister was as noted for his "bulls" as for his wit. Thus, on being told by a witness that certain oats, the loss of which was the subject of inquiry, had probably been eaten by fowls, he growled out: "Fowls, is it? *Two-legged fowls*, I'm thinkin'."

Speaking of Irish barristers, mention

must be made of Magillicuddy. "Mac's" whole appearance corroborated his speech to prove his Milesian origin. At a country Quarter Sessions, on one occasion, acting as Crown Prosecutor, he was endeavouring to extract certain information about a horse from a witness who was palpably assuming ignorance. "So ye don't remimber anythin' about the harse?" said Magillicuddy. "No," said the witness. "Shure, thin, we'll try the process of elimin-a-shun," said counsel. "Was he a pink harse?" The witness contemptuously replied that he was not. "It's green, thin, perhaps he was?" continued "Mac." The witness asserted that, of course, he wasn't green. "An' nayther am I green, nor the Coort, ayther. Come out wid it. What colour *was* the harse?" retorted Magillicuddy, so fiercely that the terrified witness at once blurted out the truth.

Even through the stolid surroundings of the Industrial Arbitration Courts, where the air is heavy with figures and the "cost of living" is the burning topic of the hour, the rays of humour occasionally stray. A witness, complaining loudly about the effect of his employment upon his health, once startled the Court considerably by affirming solemnly that he had been "corfin up very coarse veins for weeks"! The disease of which this novel symptom is a feature has not yet, apparently, been diagnosed by the medical profession. On another occasion a witness complained that his wage was insufficient to cover his living expenses, and in proof thereof produced his weekly bills, which were certainly extraordinarily lengthy. Glancing through them, counsel remarked: "I notice here a great number of items for 'tinned lobster.' Rather an unusual and expensive item, is it not?" "I had to get those for my wife," returned the witness. "Her stummick was weak *and the doctor ordered her a fish diet.*"

It is in the magistrates' courts that the "purest rays serene" of legal humour most often shine. Phil May had a sketch in the *Bulletin* once, representing a "Jay-Pay" in Northern Queensland bending over and addressing a batch of "drunks" in front of him and saying: "Before Oi sintence yez, bhoys, till me where Oi lift yez lasht noight." He always declared that it was the representation of an actual fact, and anyone having much experience of the Australian up-country magistrate in his native lair can quite believe it. It was only the other day that a man, having pleaded "guilty," was "dismissed" by a Bench of Victorian magistrates on the ground that, the list being a long one, they would not have time to go into the facts and would, therefore, give him the benefit of the doubt! And there is, too, the well-known case of a similar tribunal solemnly convicting one of two parties charged with "conspiring together," after dismissing the charge against the other.

But of all matters that come before the magistrates of Australia, the most prolific of humour are, possibly, those in which Chinamen are concerned. Interpreters are frequently needed in these cases, the average Celestial having a habit of entrenching himself behind a stolid "No-Savee," which nothing can broach. These interpreters are usually themselves Chinese officials attached to the Court; but on one occasion the services of an untried man had to be utilized. On the witness replying most volubly for some five minutes by the watch to a question by the examining inspector, the "interpreter" became obviously lost.

The average Celestial has a habit of entrenching himself behind a stolid "No-Savee," which nothing can broach.

"Well, well," queried the magistrate, "what's all that about? What does he say?" The interpreter hesitated. "He say, your worship, I think he say 'Yes,'" was the astounding reply.

Then, again, there was the case of Ah Fat, who was caught smuggling opium *in flagrante delicto*, but whom, by reason of the usual "No-Savee," it was necessary to try with all the paraphernalia that British justice

demands on such an occasion, including, of course, the inevitable interpreter. Each question was asked in English, translated into Chinese, answered in Chinese, translated back again into English, and then taken down by the official reporter. The proceedings were naturally lengthened to a prodigious degree by this performance; but eventually a wearied magistrate found the accused guilty and fined him twenty pounds. The inspector who was conducting the case had his doubts of Ah Fat's "No-Savee" and, before the sentence could be translated to the convicted man, said to the latter: "Come on, John. It's fifty pounds for you this time." "Wha' for?" exclaimed Ah Fat. "No fea'! He say twenty pun, no fifty. No fea'!"

Finally, there was Mr. Isaacs, for long the "Darling"—so to speak—of the Australian Stipendiary Bench, of whose airy persiflage two specimens may fittingly conclude these reminiscences. A man named Swift was before him on the usual "drunk and disorderly" charge, and the arresting constable, whose brogue could be cut with the proverbial knife, was giving evidence which he interlarded with "Shure, y'r Hanner," at every dozen words. He explained that Swift had got away, but had been eventually recaptured. "Ah," said Mr. Isaacs, "the race is not always to the 'swift,' but sometimes to the 'shure.'" On the other occasion referred to, a little man, of unmistakably Hebrew birth, was brought before him for "language." "Why did you go on like this?" asked the magistrate. "Your Hon'r, it's this vay," said the prisoner. "Ven I gets the drink in me—vell——" and he raised his hands significantly. "I see," said Mr. Isaacs, "*just a little 'jew-de-spree'!*" and was so pleased with his witticism that he let the offender off.

"Ven I gets the drink in me—vell——" and he raised his hands significantly.

ACROSTICS.

Our thirty-third series of acrostics begins with No. 157, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 157.

The first, a month of summer heat,
Brings dreams of restful holiday;
The last, a busy London street,
Brings dreams of dancing waves and spray.
Within the first and last combined
Joyous and quaint Romance we find.

1. Two words, a maiden; wrong, when one.
2. Erect, it stands on either side.
3. The man can shoot, you see his gun.
4. Shelter from rain this will provide.
5. A golden coin, a king, supreme.
6. A kind of cloth, a British stream.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 157 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, The Strand Magazine, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on August 11th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 156.

1. D a n S
2. E u s t a c E
3. S e v e r N
4. T i m o N
5. R e g a l i A
6. U l t i C
7. C o r i n t H
8. T o u l o u s E
9. I l b u R
10. O m r I
11. N e k s h e B

Notes.—Proem, Byron's poem, The Destruction of Sennacherib. Light 1. The French preposition. Dan; Genesis, xxx. Light 2. Saint Eustace. 4. The inscription on Timon's tomb; Plutarch, Life of Antonius. 6. Poult, ice; to apply a poultice. Poe. 7. Fat hens, Athens. 8. Toul, Ouse; the battle of Toulouse. 9. Wilbur Wright. 10. Father of Ahab. 11. Moore, Lalla Rookh, part I.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

A Drama Unrehearsed

BY

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

Illustrated by
F. MATANIA, R.I.

"EULALIE DÉLIBES——?" There was a peculiar inflexion in Mordaunt's voice as he caught up the name I had mentioned. He looked at me over the cigar held between his fingers, and seemed to hesitate. Then he said merely, but in a tone of emphatic conviction: "An amazing woman. Probably the greatest actress of them all."

Mordaunt—an old friend held to long absences by the Diplomatic Service, of which he is a junior ornament—had accompanied me back to my rooms after the theatre. We had been talking of the great actresses one or other of us had seen—Eleanora Duse, Sarah Bernhardt, Mary Anderson, Ellen Terry; and of those we should have liked to have seen—Adrienne Lecouvreur, Mrs. Siddons, Rachel. And then I had remembered Eulalie Délibes.

"What's become of her?" I remarked as I rose to mix another couple of whiskies and sodas. "She seems to have disappeared completely. But I don't recall seeing any notice of her death."

Mordaunt picked up his glass and sipped at it.

"No. I don't think she's dead," he replied, again with that peculiar suggestion of hesitancy in his tone. But he met my inquiring glance with a perfectly stolid face.

"Did you ever see her act?"

"Many times. And"—he hesitated again—"the last drama I saw her in was without any footlights—was unrehearsed. I'm not likely to forget it."

"Fire away," I said, encouragingly. Mordaunt's most interesting experiences always have to be corkscrewed out of him.

He contemplated his cigar-tip reflectively for a moment.

"It was five years ago—my first winter in Rome," he said, "when I knew her——"

"You *knew* her then?" This was an unsuspected chapter in my friend's life.

"Don't interrupt. It was just after she had seceded from the Comédie Française—you remember the fuss there was over that?—and she had brought her own company to Rome for the season. She had an immense success. Rome went wild over her. And it was no wonder. It was not merely that her acting was a miracle of fine art—and she could play everything, from the fresh girlishness of a Molière heroine to the sensuous Byzantine magnificence of Sardou's Theodora, while her Phèdre gave you the feeling that you understood tragedy for the first time, left you lifted and purged by an ecstasy of sublime emotion—her personality was a miracle also. That is the only word for it. It was unique in its power, in the magic spell it cast over you. She seemed not a woman but a goddess, a goddess whose being derived from spheres beyond human attainment, a goddess who made you realize human futility. I can't express it. And beautiful! I don't know if Helen of Troy and Cleopatra were as beautiful as we imagine them, but hers was a revelation of beauty beyond imagining, a beauty that was incomparable because there was no living woman who might be compared with her. When she came upon the stage, the audience was gripped in a peculiar hush—a hush of awe. When the curtain went down upon the last act, it was a riot. She was marvellous!" He paused.

"Go on," I said. "I didn't know you were a poet."

"She made one a poet." He looked again, with the distaste of an Englishman for his

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own involuntary enthusiasm, at his cigar, resumed after a moment. " That was only one side of her life, of course—the side behind the footlights. After the performance, there was a string of extravagantly luxurious motor-cars at the stage-door—most exalted personages—I won't mention names. The doorkeeper made a fortune. I—er—succumbed like the rest.

" Desmarets of the French Embassy introduced me. I couldn't compete, of course. Apart from all the exalted personages, there was a billionaire French sugar-refiner, Lenormand. He was a gross creature, at once stupid and cunning—and he was completely bewitched. He held a precarious priority in her affections by the simple expedient of out-bribing everyone else. It was whispered that he had already spent millions on her, and he was quite obviously in the act of flinging away all the millions that remained to him. He didn't care. The only use he had for money was to purchase a smile from Eulalie." Mordaunt sighed. " I'm afraid we were all much in the same boat. I managed to spend three years' income in three weeks—all on the merest trifles for her—and all I received in exchange was the privilege of kissing her finger-tips—and, of course, a smile that made one's head dizzy. It seemed quite natural at the time. She was a goddess—and all the wealth of the world was hers by right. She was Eulalie Délibes, the unique ——" He sighed, gazed across my room as though seeing her in the smoke-wreaths that drifted in the air.

" Well ? " I said, as the pause prolonged itself. " Is that all ? "

" No. That's only the prologue. The drama—and it was something of a drama—is yet to come. I went, of course, religiously to every performance at which she appeared, and presently I became aware that the next box to mine contained a worshipper as assiduous as myself. He was an old man, but tall and straight, with a great aquiline nose, and thin tight lips above a little tuft of pointed white beard—a head of subtle power, such a head as Bellini painted in the portraiture of Pope or Cardinal. He was, very vividly, an aristocrat of the genuine antique brand, consciously of a superior stuff to common mortals. One evening I asked Antonetti—the wild-blood son of the Marchese Antonetti, and another of the faithful—who he was.

" ' That's the Duca di San Durato,' replied Antonetti. ' Queer old bird.' Antonetti was proud of his idiomatic English. ' Lives like a hermit at his castle up in the Alban Mountains. His family claims descent from ancient Roman times. He's fabulously rich. Keep your eye on him. The Délibes has heard that he comes regularly to see her—she hears everything, you know—and she is wild to get an opportunity to smile at him. If she does '—Antonetti laughed—' then the only thing for poor Lenormand to do is to shoot himself.'

" I was personally quite callous to any imaginable tragic end for the insufferable Lenormand, but I was extremely interested in the possibility of so formidable a newcomer among our little mob of rival wooers—not that I personally ever had any chance, of course. I was merely an unnoticed doormat for the divine Eulalie to wipe her exquisite feet on. Still," he sighed a little, " I suppose I clung to some absurd fairy-story hope—just as I knew Antonetti, for all his cynicism, did himself. And Antonetti's phrase ' fabulously rich ' rang with disagreeable persistence in my ears. If Eulalie were already wild to bewitch him—— !

" ' Has he a wife ? ' I asked.

" ' No,' said Antonetti, who knew everybody and everything. ' She died a couple of years ago. Ever since then the old hawk has lived shut up in his castle on the mountains. Now, I suppose, this is the reaction. Heaven knows what follies he will commit if our divine Eulalie gets hold of him ! '

" I glanced again at the old man leaning over the edge of his box, his opera-glasses in his hand, plainly waiting for Eulalie to come again upon the stage, and his grimly proud countenance did not look at all like that of one who committed follies. Still, one never knew. He would not be the first Duke to marry an actress. Would Eulalie be content to extinguish her divine self as the Duchessa di San Durato ? It would be a crime. I fervently hoped that this fabulously rich old aristocrat's intentions—if he had any—were thoroughly dishonourable.

" IT was perhaps a week later, a Sunday night, when he took the decisive step on which several of our young bloods had been betting, *pro* and *con*. The play had terminated in the usual frenzy of applause. I went round, as I usually did, to the *salotto* attached to Eulalie's dressing-room. Only the more humble of her devotees happened to be present—Lenormand, fat, cunning, anxiously the proprietor, gloating and yet scarcely daring to gloat over our hopeless rivalry ; Voltarini—one of the numberless Venetian Voltarini ; Desmarets ; Antonetti ; young Villiers, and myself. And, like a goddess, so beautiful that it caught your breath to look at her, Eulalie sat and smiled at our enthusiastic flatteries. She had played the part of an empress that night and she was still in her costume, a costume that flashed and dazzled with precious stones—which were all genuine. Our Eulalie prided

herself on never wearing imitations, even upon the stage—it was one of her pretty little caprices. She was wearing, on a moderate computation, three of M. Lenormand's great sugar refineries as well as the entire estates of a certain Russian Grand Duke.

"Her vivid presence held us as by a magnet, and her light musical laugh—she was in a good mood that evening—was a champagne-like intoxication as we rivalled each other in neatly-turned but ardent compliments upon her acting and herself. Behind us, old Lenormand glowered and bit his finger-nails. He was the son of a peasant, and he had no knack of saying pretty things. He kept his eloquence with his bankers. And Eulalie tortured him heartlessly by pretending to listen to us, by giving us—each one in turn—a melting glance from her wonderful long-lashed eyes that seemed to promise Heaven—some day. In the middle of this pleasant trifling there was a tap at the door.

"I think Eulalie guessed who sought admission. Perhaps she had herself discreetly arranged the affair—she was capable of it. Anyway, there was an unusual note of impatience in her voice as she repeated at the second knock, '*Entrez—mais entrez donc!*'

"The door opened, and revealed the manager of the theatre. Behind him stood, tall, white-haired, grim, and subtle, the Duca di San Durato, the blue sash of an Order across his shirt-front. I thought I saw a peculiar flash of triumph in Eulalie's eyes as the pair came forward. It was gone in an instant. She sat quietly composed, a vision of more than human loveliness, with the dignity of an empress in her gorgeousness of precious stones. The manager effected the introduction. The Duke spoke in perfect French, with the manner of a grand seigneur.

"'Madame, it has latterly been the desire of my life to make your acquaintance.'

"He bowed charmingly, if a little stiffly, and lifted to his lips the finger-tips of the hand she extended to him.

"She smiled—as only she could smile; an uncovering of witchery—and answered him in that low-toned musical voice which sent a thrill through one.

"'You honour me too much, *Monsieur le Duc*. Consider me at your service.'

"'Alas! Madame, beauty such as yours is never at the service of old age.'

"The compliment was perhaps a little daring, but Eulalie did not resent it. Her eyes brightened momentarily as she renewed her smile.

"'The courtesy of a great gentleman, *Monsieur le Duc*, brings all things to its service. It can become, I imagine, irresistible.'

. . . . . .

"WE younger men had instinctively withdrawn ourselves together at one side of the *salotto*. There was a quietly assured dignity in the bearing of the old Duke which imposed upon us. It would have been presumption to have intruded in the conversation of that pair who were so splendidly matched—she in her marvellous beauty, he the very incarnation of a great aristocrat, both indefinably remote from—superior to—us. But at her reply my heart jumped. I sent a swift glance to Antonetti. Things were moving with a vengeance. Eulalie's answer was scarcely equivocal. We both looked to old Lenormand. He had gone white as a sheet, was gnawing his finger-nails harder than ever. Antonetti grinned. I'm afraid none of us had much sympathy with the poor man's agony of apprehension.

"I turned my attention again to that man and woman who were the provocative centre of the emotions which had so suddenly filled the room. Eulalie smiled at the Duke—and I could feel that her eyes were measuring him, were appraising his susceptibility to her magical fascination, while her face remained in an expression that was exquisitely innocent of those thoughts. Their words to and fro were visibly mere polite banalities—a mask, I could feel, for a deeper mutual interrogation that was unuttered. As I watched them, I noticed on the Duke's ungloved hand a ring of remarkable, if somewhat exotic, splendour. It was a marvellous piece of sixteenth-century goldsmith's work, set with a great diamond that must have been of colossal value. Eulalie's eyes also rested on it, involuntarily. As I have said, she could not resist jewellery.

"'You will permit me, *Monsieur le Duc*, to admire your ring? It is antique, is it not?'

"He held it out towards her.

"'Pope Alexander VI. gave it to one of my ancestors, Madame. I regret that it is an heirloom. Only that fact prevents me from asking you to honour me by accepting it.'

"She examined it, cupidity in her eyes.

"'It is magnificent,' she said, with genuine enthusiasm.

"She handed it back to him with a sigh.

"He smiled at her.

"'At my *castello*, Madame, I have a collection of sixteenth-century gems which is perhaps unique. They came with the wedding-portion of one of the Borgias who married into my family. Since you appreciate antique jewellery, it might perhaps one

day interest you to examine them—and to choose any which pleased you.'

"The old Duke spoke with perfect calmness, as though he were merely suggesting that she should pick a few peaches out of his garden. Eulalie's great eyes opened wide at him.

"'But you are too good, *Monsieur le Duc!* Jewels of the Borgias!' Her exclamation was almost childish in its delighted surprise.

"'May I presume then, Madame, that you will do me the honour of accepting my invitation?'

"'Willingly, *Monsieur le Duc!*' Eulalie's eyes sparkled involuntarily for a moment, were instantly quelled to their normal limpidity. Eulalie never overplayed her hand. 'It is I who will be honoured.' She smiled at him, a smile that mimed an ingenuous—almost a virginal—humility.

He lifted to his lips the finger-tips of the hand she extended to him.

"The old Duke reflected for a moment.

"'To-day is Sunday, Madame. On Mondays, I believe, there is no performance at the theatres. Would to-morrow evening be entirely convenient to you? You will, I trust, flatter my poor hospitality by dining

with me. San Durato is scarcely thirty kilometres distant, and your chauffeur will find the road is good. I trust that you have no prior engagement for to-morrow ? '

" Eulalie smiled again at him.

" ' If I had, *Monsieur le Duc*—it should be cancelled, *soyez-en sûr !* '

" The old Duke bowed gallantly to her.

" ' You make me your debtor, Madame.' He turned to where we stood at the side of the room, swept a comprehensive glance over us. ' And if these gentlemen would care to accompany you, Madame, I should consider myself additionally honoured.' He bowed also to us. ' You are all friends of Madame Délibes, I believe ? '

" We all accepted, with appropriately phrased thanks, this unexpected invitation—all except poor Lenormand, who stood white, shaking, and speechless. I have never seen a man's face look like his looked then—never. But the old Duke seemed not to notice anything abnormal in his appearance.

" ' Excellent,' he said, cheerfully. ' You will all come.' He turned again to Eulalie, bowed courteously before her, raised her long-fingered white hand for the slightest touch of his lips. ' Till to-morrow then, Madame. And I promise myself a very great pleasure.'

" He turned to us, with a smile and a short bow.

" ' Good-evening, messieurs. And remember, I expect you all to-morrow.'

" He went out. The door had scarcely closed after him, when Lenormand leaped in front of Eulalie.

" ' You shall not go ! ' His voice quivered. At the sight of his contorted face, we all made an instinctive movement to interpose ourselves.

" But Eulalie merely looked up at him and laughed.

" ' Of course, I am going ! Don't be absurd, Louis. Who will prevent me ? '

" He stood gasping for a moment, his rage and despair inarticulate by their very intensity. At last, he got his voice.

" ' I will give you a million francs if you do not go. I will give you the cheque now ! ' He commenced to tug at his breast-pocket.

" Eulalie laughed again.

" ' *Mon cher Louis*, I know that million francs—it is your last. I leave it you. Keep it for the chorus girl with whom you will console yourself.'

" He bellowed at her—there is no other word to describe the sound he made—it was the bellow of a desperately wounded animal.

" ' Eulalie ! '

" Her bright laugh made me, for one, shudder.

" ' My dear Louis, you are making yourself a little ridiculous. Of course, I am going to-morrow night.' She waved her hand towards us. ' And so are my friends here. And you shall come too—to say good-bye.' It was the perfection of cold-hearted cruelty.

" The gross old fellow stood there staring at her, his purple lips moving as if in speech, but uttering no sound—and then suddenly he collapsed into a chair, white, looking like death. I found myself in the incongruous position of reviving my hated rival with brandy. Eulalie had quite calmly gone into her dressing-room. Antonetti and I took him in a cab to his hotel, handed him over to his valet.

" WE went home wondering what the devil was going to happen to-morrow. We were all perfectly sure, of course, that nothing in the world would prevent Eulalie going to San Durato. But we were all not a little surprised to see Lenormand follow her docilely out of the hotel, and take his seat in her great limousine car. He still looked like death, and uttered not a word. Eulalie, on the other hand, was in the highest spirits, and never have I seen her look more beautiful. A repressed excitement flushed her cheeks, sparkled in her long-lashed wonderful eyes. Wrapped in her voluminous furs, she looked exquisitely precious. She offered me a seat in her car—and I found myself craving for her, craving in every fibre for this heartless woman who was going deliberately to bewitch that fabulously rich old Duke until it was almost madness.

" Eventually, we arrived. The Duke himself stood within the high-vaulted entrance hall to receive us. He bowed to Eulalie and lifted her hand to the merest touch of his lips, as he bowed briefly to us with a courteous word of welcome. Once again I had the sense—despite the disparity in their years—that they were perfectly matched. Jealous though I was, I almost could not grudge her to him.

" A waiting-woman came and took her off to some prepared toilet chamber. And we, after our coats had been removed, were led by the Duke into a small Gothic-arched room adjacent, where, on a table lit by silver candlesticks, cocktails were standing prepared for us. He invited us to them, with that same charm of perfectly dispensed hospitality, and then—with almost exaggerated old-fashioned ceremony—begged us to excuse him for a moment or two. ' My servants of late years have been unused to entertainment,' he said, ' and I wish to see for myself that the table is worthy of Madame.'

" I remember the six of us standing there —Lenormand, Antonetti, Voltarini, Desmarets, young Villiers, and myself, five of us with glasses in our hands. There seemed a peculiar oppression in that room.

" ' I wonder what comedy we're in for to-night,' said Antonetti, suddenly.

" ' I hope it is a comedy—and not a tragedy,' I replied, glancing at Lenormand, who stood a little removed from us. He did not drink. He said nothing. He just stood like one dazed, his lips moving silently. Personally, I believe that for the first time in his life the old fellow was praying.

" At that moment a gong boomed sonorously somewhere beyond the room, and the Duke entered.

" ' Pardon my leaving you, messieurs,' he said. He spoke French throughout as a common medium for our mingled nationalities. ' The dinner is, I believe, waiting for us.'

" He led us out into the hall again, where Eulalie was just at that moment descending the candelabra-lit staircase. She looked a Borgia herself in her rich dress—there was a temporary fashion for high collars at that moment—perfectly assimilated to that semi-mediæval setting. And her beauty was superb. I heard a little choking gasp from Lenormand behind me. The Duke bowed and gave her his arm. A curtain in front of us was suddenly drawn aside at a low word from a statuesque old butler immobile in front of it, and we followed them into the dining-room.

" THERE was nothing particularly remarkable about that dinner except that it was as good as I have ever eaten. Lenormand scarcely touched a mouthful—as, also, he never spoke a word—but the rest of us did justice to it. Eulalie was brilliant. She could be dazzlingly witty when she liked—and she liked just then. Quite evidently, she set herself to captivate the old Duke, and apparently she succeeded. He laughed with more than politeness at her sallies, and when she turned her head away I saw his eyes almost hungrily searching her face. In fact, he would have been made of stone if he had not been captivated—for the man who could have resisted Eulalie's power of fascination, welling effortlessly from that astounding beauty of face and figure, is not yet born. For myself—and the other guests, I know, shared my feelings—I felt that I was at a funeral feast, the funeral of my own wildly absurd hopes. Five of us at least tried valiantly to be merry at it.

" I recall only one definite fragment of the conversation at that meal. It was a question asked by the Duke.

" ' Did you ever meet a young Italian—the Marchese di Marignano—in Paris, Madame ? '

" Eulalie reflected a moment, plainly searching among a multitude of memories.

" ' Yes,' she replied. ' I do vaguely remember him. A pleasant young man. He finished badly, I think—a suicide.'

" I saw Antonetti look up sharply, but he made no remark, and the talk drifted on to other topics.

" The dinner terminated, and the Duke rose, a wine-glass in his hand.

" ' Madame,' he said, ' before we take our coffee in an adjoining room, I should like to drink a toast. This evening is memorable in my life. It happens also to be the birthday of someone very dear to me. Madame —messieurs,' his eyes swept round to us, ' will you join me in drinking to that person—a pledge of enduring felicity henceforth ? '

" Eulalie stared at him in surprise, her face vivid with delight.

" ' But, *mon cher Duc !* ' she exclaimed—she had now got beyond formal ceremony with him, ' how did you guess ?—how did you find out ? Not even my friends here knew it was my birthday—it is an anniversary I never keep ! '

" ' Madame,' he smiled at her, performed one of his courtly little bows, ' shall we say that I have an instinct for anniversaries ? Will you not yourself drink to that enduring felicity ? '

" ' With all my heart, *mon cher Duc !* ' She rose, radiant with a brilliancy of triumph, clinked her glass against his. ' And to yours ! '

" We all drank the toast—even Lenormand, who smashed his glass in setting it down again. Antonetti winked at me. Things were indeed moving. Young Villiers drank boisterously ' to Eulalie ! '—and received a fascinating direct glance of thanks that made him change colour. I could feel that Eulalie already considered herself the Duchess.

" We left the dinner-table, and passed through a nail-studded door that was opened for us.

" I remember Eulalie's little cry of admiration as, on the Duke's arm, she entered that adjoining room.

" ' *Mon cher Duc,* what a magnificent apartment ! '

" It was indeed magnificent—its lofty roof was raftered with mediæval-painted beams, immense and priceless tapestries covered its walls, a fire of gigantic logs blazed in a vast carved-marble fireplace. Its excessively large area was reduced to more comfortable proportions for us by a linked series of high Cordoba-leather screens

which shut off two-thirds of it. On a great oak refectory table, lit by Cinquecento silver candelabra, a servant was at that moment placing coffee for us, by the side of an array of decantered liqueurs. His task finished, the servant departed noiselessly. The old Duke bowed courteously in acknowledgment of Eulalie's reiterated enthusiasm.

"'I am flattered by your appreciation, Madame. It is the Hall of Justice of my ancestors.'

"He deposited her in an antique but comfortable arm-chair, turned to us.

"'Will you please serve yourselves, messieurs? I directed the servants to retire that we might be left in more complete intimacy. I have to show Madame those Borgia jewels.' He smiled at us.

"WE did help ourselves, both to the Duke's coffee and liqueurs and to his cigars. There ensued a little pause, almost awkward. There was no disguising the reason of that constraint. We were waiting for those jewels to be produced. Eulalie could scarcely contain her feverish impatience. Her eyes glittered. Not once did she look at poor Lenormand.

"The Duke did not keep her long in suspense. He went behind the screens, returned after a moment bearing a large and heavy casket embossed with Cinquecento silver cupids in relief upon a ground of antique red velvet. It was a museum-piece in itself. He set it carefully upon the table, unlocked its heavy fastenings with a key he drew from his pocket, opened the lid. Then, again with that little courtly bow, he turned to Eulalie.

"'Those jewels, Madame, for nearly five centuries have been the portion of the lady who marries the heir of my house.'

"She had risen from her seat, had approached the casket from which the old Duke now drew long ropes of immense pearls; great tiaras that flashed in a blaze of diamonds; pendants and breastpieces wrought fancifully in a perfection of the goldsmith's art and studded with a glowing wealth of precious stones; ear-drops of colossal single emeralds and rubies and sapphires; rings that were strung together in dozens. For once I saw Eulalie turn pale in an indisputably genuine emotion. She trembled as she half stretched forth her hand.

"'And, *mon cher Duc*,' a nervous little laugh accompanied her words, '—— I am really to make my choice?'

"The old Duke smiled that impenetrably courteous smile at her.

"'They are yours by right, Madame.'

"'By right?' She stopped, stared at him, incredulous of his words—was this a declaration in form?—a declaration to which we who crowded round could be testimony? 'You mean——?' For once she lost her poise, almost stammered. She had not expected the event to come on her quite so brusquely.

"The old Duke still smiled.

"'I mean, Madame, that—unless I am incorrectly informed—you are the wife, or rather the widow, of that Marchese di Marignano whose name you so vaguely remember. These jewels are therefore yours by right. I now give them to you before witnesses.'

"We gasped in the shock of that surprise. Antonetti uttered a sharp exclamation. Lenormand blew heavily in a miraculous relief, mopped his damp brow. Only Eulalie stood absolutely silent, stock still, staring at the old Duke. It was impossible to divine what was passing in her mind at that moment. I can only say that in that immobility she looked divinely beautiful, utterly expressionless though was her face. Eulalie had a will of iron—and she was not a great actress for nothing. When at last she spoke it was in a tone of complete bewilderment.

"'The Marchese di Marignano——?'

"The old Duke nodded his head.

"'The Marchese di Marignano, Madame, whose birthday we celebrated just now. He happened to be my only son—although, since we had foolishly quarrelled, no doubt he did not inform you of that fact when he married you.'

"'This is absurd!' said Eulalie, contemptuously. 'Quite absurd!'

"'Do you deny it?'

"'Of course I deny it!'

"'Then,' he smiled at her—the smile of an authentic Borgia holding an enemy in his inexorable grip, 'I must produce a photographic copy of the entry of your marriage—at the Mairie of the XVth arrondissement in Paris.' From his breast-pocket he drew a folded document. 'You, Madame, are already familiar with it.' He half-turned and showed it to us. 'I must ask you, messieurs, to identify a signature that is doubtless well known to you.' I glanced at the document. The signature was incontestable. I treasured that bold 'Eulalie' on a half-sheet of scented paper myself. 'None of you protests it? Then, I think we may take that matter as proved, Madame?'

"Once more, she stood silent. Our divine Eulalie was thinking hard. Suddenly, she shrugged her shoulders.

"'Well,' she said, 'supposing I admit it? It was a foolish affair—done on an

impulse. One that I immediately regretted —and have since striven to forget.'

" ' Precisely, Madame,' said the old Duke, still with that same ominously cold courtesy, ' but some of us have memories that are more tenacious. And I must take leave to revive yours.'

" She drew herself to her full height.

" ' *Monsieur le Duc*, I do not understand you. And I cannot permit you further to abuse the perfidious hospitality you have seen fit to offer me. Whatever ties there were between your son and myself have been cancelled by his death. I was ignorant of his family, and desire to remain ignorant of it. I must request you, *Monsieur le Duc*, to send for my car.'

" Again he smiled.

" ' Unfortunately, Madame, my servants have instructions to ignore—for the next hour—any summons from the bell of this room.'

" Her fine nostrils expanded under this outrage as she faced him.

" ' Then, *Monsieur le Duc*, I must find it myself.'

" YOUNG Villiers half sprang forward, and I held him back by main force, writhing in my grip. Instinctively, I felt that this was not a matter in which we could yet interfere, that there was yet more to develop between her and the old Duke. The others felt the same. Not one of us moved. She strode across the room to the iron-studded door, tugged at it. Then, her face ablaze with indignant fury, she swung round again to her suavely smiling host.

" ' *Monsieur le Duc !*—Be good enough to unlock this door ! '

" He made no gesture.

" ' You must pardon me if I decline, Madame. We have still somewhat to say to each other.'

" She glared at him, looked towards Lenormand.

" ' Louis ! Take me home ! ' Her actual words were '*Mène-moi chez nous.*' Lenormand started, with an infantile joy on his big face, at their astounding, overwhelming significance of reprieve for him. Before he could make a movement, however, the Duke had checked him with a lift of his hand.

" ' Madame,' he addressed her still with that same deadly courtesy, ' whatever M. Lenormand's goodwill, he is powerless to assist you. That door is locked, and will remain locked until I—who am the only master in this house—give orders for it to be opened.'

" Young Villiers could no longer be restrained. He broke from my grasp, sprang towards the tormentor of his idol.

" ' *Monsieur le Duc !* ' he burst out passionately. ' I must protest ! This is not the act of a gentleman ! And we here—I at any rate—cannot stand by and see Madame Eulalie detained thus against her will ! Please be good enough to open that door ! '

" The old Duke smiled at him.

" ' Gently, young man, gently ! ' he said. ' The door shall be opened presently. But first we have an important matter to settle.' He turned to all of us. ' Messieurs, I invited you all here to-night partly, of course, for the pleasure of your company——' he bowed slightly, '—but chiefly because you are all gentlemen of some standing in the world and because you represent three nationalities. You represent the fairest tribunal I could, at short notice, collect.'

" I, for one, at any rate, gasped at that word ' tribunal.' What was coming ? The others stared. Old Lenormand, pathetically impotent, not daring to meet the glance of that imperious woman who still stood by the door, mopped his face with a big red handkerchief. The Duke continued :—

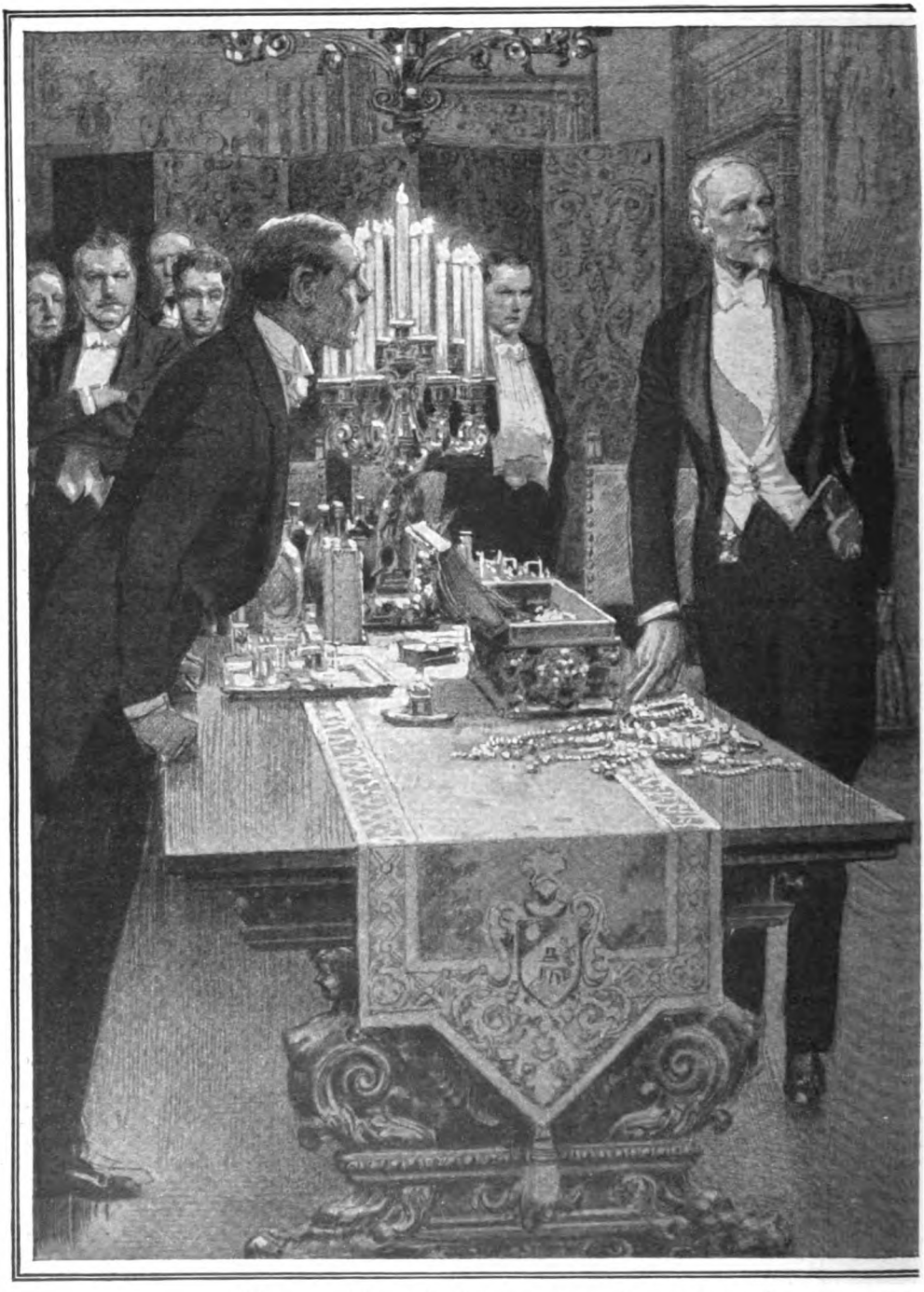
" ' Nor was it fortuitously that I brought you all into this room which, as I remarked, is the Hall of Justice of my ancestors. I chose it as an appropriate place. I have a very serious charge, gentlemen, to bring against Madame la Marchesa di Marignano—if she will permit me to designate her by her correct title.' He turned to her. ' Madame, may I suggest that you give yourself the trouble of listening to it ? '

" She strode magnificently from the door towards us, halted by the table where the jewels lay in a glittering heap.

" ' What is this mummery ? ' she demanded, with a superb contempt, her splendid eyes flashing at him. ' I do not profess to understand you, *Monsieur le Duc—mon beau-père.*' She, as it were, underlined scornfully his quality of father-in-law.

" He smiled quietly at her.

" ' You did not profess to understand me just now,' he said. ' And yet, Madame, I succeeded in making you understand.' He addressed himself again to us. ' Messieurs, I think your deliberations will be calmer if you are seated. May I suggest that you draw chairs for yourselves to each side of that table. You shall be the jury, unofficial, but, I hope, just. You, M. Lenormand, shall be judge—oblige me by taking this chair at the head of the table.' Lenormand began a feeble stammering protest, but the old Duke silenced him with a wave of his hand. There was a concentrated authority in that old aristocrat which crushed him utterly.



Her face ablaze with indignant fury, she swung round to her suavely

smiling host. "Monsieur le Duc! Be good enough to unlock this door!"

" What was coming? The old Duke continued, after the pause in which we took our seats: ' I, messieurs, propose to constitute myself prosecutor. If any one of you cares to offer himself as advocate for the defence—— ? '

" Young Villiers sprang impetuously to his feet.

" ' I do ! ' he cried. ' And I protest in advance, *Monsieur le Duc*, against the whole of this monstrous proceeding ! '

" The Duke bowed and turned to M. Lenormand, stupid in his chair.

" ' M. Lenormand—kindly register the protest of M. Villiers.' He swung round to Eulalie, scornfully erect at the corner of the table and motionless as a statue. ' Permit me, Madame, to offer you a seat—the seat of the accused.'

" She flashed at him.

" ' I decline to be a party to this absurdity ! '

" The Duke smiled.

" ' Kindly register, M. Lenormand, that the accused declines to recognize this court. Register also, that from time immemorial the Signori of San Durato have possessed the right of high and low justice in this hall, and that this right, although of late years disused, has never been abrogated. The protest of the accused is invalid.'

" M. Lenormand merely mopped his face with his red handkerchief and stared as if he were drunk.

" THE old Duke turned to us, his thin lips tight above the little pointed beard he stroked with one hand. He was in perfect command of himself, spoke with a quiet suavity that gave me a shudder.

" ' Messieurs, I shall not detain you long. The facts of the case may be briefly stated. My son, the Marchese di Marignano, was a highly-placed officer on the General Staff of the Italian Army, and two years ago he was detailed to go with a military mission to Paris. By virtue of his position, he was entrusted with military secrets of vital importance to his country. In Paris he had the misfortune to meet this lady who is now his widow. He fell violently in love with her—an affection she undoubtedly failed to reciprocate—and carried his passion to the absurd extreme of desiring to make her his wife. Nothing else would suffice him—he had dreams, it seems, of making her an honest woman.' Eulalie stood motionless, did not even quiver under this stinging sarcasm. She divorced herself entirely, by an arrogant silence, from these proceedings. The Duke continued: ' Despite Madame the present Marchesa di Marignano's great and well-deserved fame as an actress, and the sums she earned thereby—despite the multitude of her extremely wealthy admirers—Madame was in debt to an immense amount. It is possible that she had indulged in some unfortunate speculation; I do not know. But the fact is indisputable. I have in my possession, and can produce to you, her cancelled notes of hand.'

" Eulalie turned upon him, with a biting scorn.

" ' You sent your agents to burgle my apartment ! '

" He smiled at her.

" ' Precisely, Madame. To resume—Madame was appallingly in debt and seriously pressed by her creditors. At this juncture, one of those society jackals who make it their business to ferret out and profit by the embarrassments of—er—such people as Madame, presented himself to her as the agent, unofficial, of course, of a certain foreign Power. He knew of my son's passion for this lady—and there is no doubt of the proposition he made to her. I say " no doubt," for another of my agents—*not* a burglar this time, Madame,' he smiled at her, ' persuaded him with certain potent arguments to write and sign a confession of the fact—which again I can produce for you. I have all the necessary documents here. I can produce to you the letter which she wrote to my son saying that *unless he proved his perfect trust in her by the test he knew of* not only would she not marry him, but she would never see him again. She had made his willingness to share with her this vital secret the test, as she called it, of his genuine love for her, of a faith in her that would justify their marriage—he had no idea, of course, of the foreign agent in the background. I can produce my son's despairing letter to her in which he begs her to impose any test but that. And I can produce another letter—the letter of a man wrought up to madness—all of you, messieurs, can, I believe, testify to Madame's quite remarkable powers of seduction—in which, wretchedly, passionately, he succumbs. The next historical document I shall put on record is the entry of their marriage. There is one more—it bears no date, but it is of the same day. It is a note from Madame to my son—they had not taken up residence together, but he believed they were to start for their honeymoon on the morrow. That note, which is signed merely ' E,' but of which you will identify the writing, briefly and cynically informed him that *the matter he knew of* was now the property of that foreign Power. Madame is a shrewd judge of men. She was sure that he would not denounce her. She was equally sure that he would do

precisely what he did do—blow his brains out. Messieurs, I charge Madame la Marchesa di Marignano with having stolen the honour of my son. I charge her with having deliberately, though indirectly and using his own despairing hand, murdered him. Madame, the court awaits your reply—or, if you prefer, the reply of your self-appointed advocate, M. Villiers—to this accusation.'

" She turned slowly towards him, her beautiful face utterly expressionless under her iron self-command.

" ' I prefer to answer it myself,' she said, haughtily. ' It is false. False from beginning to end.'

" ' You have nothing else to say ? '

" ' Nothing. Except that I await your pleasure, *Monsieur le Duc*, to unlock that door.'

" ' That will be presently.' He smiled at her. ' And in the meantime I must produce the evidence.' He moved to the casket which had contained the jewels, drew out one or two more glittering handfuls, and then—from under them—produced a small bundle of documents. ' I made your marriage-portion quite complete, Madame,' he said, with that terrible cold suavity. ' Everything is here. Permit me, messieurs, to put the evidence under your eyes.' He unfastened the tape around the documents, took up the first and opened it. ' This, messieurs, is the signed confession of Aristide Morand, alias Siegfried Knapheimer, alias Louis Cohen, the go-between I spoke of. It is dated at Paris——'

" Eulalie held up her hand.

" ' It is enough. It is all true.' She spoke with a marvellous calmness, actually smiled at him. Never once throughout that ordeal did her presence of mind forsake her. ' I could not be sure that you actually possessed those documents.'

" ALL of us at that table drew a long breath. I thought young Villiers was going to faint—he looked deathly, his teeth chattering. As to Lenormand, his face was a study in muddled bewilderment. Antonetti, Voltarini, and Desmarets looked grimly serious, like judges on the bench. They had a very definite, if Continental, code of honour.

" The old Duke turned to us.

" ' Messieurs, you have heard the confession of the accused. It absolves me from the necessity of asking you, as gentlemen and as honest men, to return a verdict of guilty. Do you enter a plea for mercy, Madame ? '

" She smiled at him in her superb beauty.

" ' If I admit the fact, *Monsieur le Duc*, I do not admit your jurisdiction. I have no pleas of any kind to make to you.'

" He smiled back at her.

" ' Nevertheless, Madame, whether you admit it or not, my jurisdiction will be effective. It is—er—a tradition in this Hall. On the spot where you are now standing, a faithless bride of my family was executed. She was beheaded.' He smiled again as Eulalie instinctively took a step to one side. ' Reassure yourself. I do not propose to inflict that supreme penalty—morally deserving of it though you are.' He looked towards us. ' Has any member of the court any remark to make before I pass sentence ? You must pardon me, Madame, for combining in my own person the functions of prosecutor and supreme judge—it is again an inherited prerogative in my family, and in virtue of it I withdraw my delegated powers from M. Lenormand, who indeed seems incapable of exercising them.' It was true. Poor M. Lenormand could only stare, speechless, his eyes protruding from his flabby face. ' I ask you again, messieurs, if you have any remark to make ! '

" We sat in an awful silence.

" ' No ? Then I proceed.' He turned towards her. ' Madame, you stripped my son of honour and of life. I am more merciful than you. I do not propose to deprive you of your life.'

" She smiled at him, but her eyes had a dangerous glint in them.

" ' You become fatiguing, *Monsieur le Duc*. You have no power to deprive me of anything.' She lifted her proudly beautiful head.

" ' You are in error, Madame. I have the power to deprive you of your honour as you deprived my son of his. And I propose to do so. I will forestall your remark that anything I may say will be only my word against yours. I took the precaution to conceal a shorthand-writer behind this screen.' As he spoke he went to the end of the wall of antique-leather screens, and pulled one aside. There, at a small table, sat a young man with horn spectacles, pen in hand, and a writing-pad in front of him. ' Every word that has passed in this room to-night has been taken down, and I have no doubt whatever that these witnesses,' he indicated us with a wave of his hand, ' will, as honest men and as gentlemen, cheerfully sign that procès-verbal. And, unless you comply with my conditions, Madame, that procès-verbal will be printed in the shortest possible time in the principal newspapers of Rome, Paris, Berlin, London, New York, Madrid, and Buenos Ayres. Even your celebrity,

Madame,' he smiled at her, 'will scarcely survive that.'

"She gasped at him. For the first time, her armour was pierced. I saw her sway as she stood by the side of that table, saw her eyes go wide with genuine horror.

"'You could not,' she gasped. 'These —these are all my friends—not one of them would sign.' She gazed wildly around on us, fixed herself finally on Lenormand. 'Louis,' she cried. 'Louis! You would not sign! You would protest that it is false! You would not sign, you who swore you loved me!'

"Poor Lenormand stared at her as though in a horrible fascination. His lips moved soundlessly. I have never seen anything so horrible as this denial of her by the gross creature who had loved her so passionately. He nodded his head.

"She uttered a little cry of desperation, turned to young Villiers.

"'You—you, Monsieur Villiers—you would not sign! Say you will not sign—you do not know what love can be—I will teach you—I will be your slave! You will not sign!' Her voice came in an agony that wrung the heart.

"Young Villiers stared at her as speechless as poor Lenormand. And then he also nodded his head — and suddenly buried his face in his hands upon the table, burst into an awful sobbing. She looked at Antonetti, Voltarini, and Desmarets. There was no need to ask them the question. Their faces were hard. She looked at me, and I—I turned away my head.

"THE old Duke had stood quite impassive during this outburst.

"'You see, Madame,' he said, suavely, 'these gentlemen are gentlemen who have not yet lost their honour.'

"She confronted him, suddenly and cynically, cold and calm.

"'I must be losing my powers,' she said, with a dazzling smile. 'That little piece of acting failed. I beg you, *Monsieur le Duc*, to believe that it was not genuine. I am not craven. What are the conditions you mention?'

"'The conditions, Madame, which for many centuries have been the prerogative of the ladies of our family who have inadvertently committed crimes. An opportunity for repentance. It is, Madame, that you will immediately take the veil and enter a convent for life.'

"Eulalie recoiled. Then, recovering herself, she laughed.

"'You jest, *Monsieur le Duc*.'

"He was coldly stern as he replied:—

"'Not in the least, Madame.'

"'I refuse!'

"'Then, Madame, I shall be under the painful necessity of publishing your dishonour to the world—of following you from place to place with the detailed story of your crime—of making you an outcast—of driving you eventually to die like a beggar in the gutter.'

"She staggered, supported herself by the table, plainly thought hard.

"'At least you will give me some days to decide?'

"'I will give you one minute, Madame, to decide whether you will sign this,' he drew a paper from his pocket, put it on the table before her, beckoned to the shorthand-writer for his pen, 'which states that of your own free will you voluntarily renounce the world and irrevocably enter into the Order of Clarice nuns—or whether these gentlemen shall sign the other document.'

"She stared at him for a moment, and then impulsively drew the paper towards her, snatched up the pen, and signed it.

"'There, *Monsieur le Duc*—does that suffice you?'

"'Perfectly. You will at least have the consolation, although the Order is strict and vowed to perpetual silence, of being in a convent which is in some sort under the patronage of your own family. The Mother-Superior is even your cousin—by marriage.'

"'Enough of jesting, *Monsieur le Duc!* Now, perhaps, you will be good enough to open that door for me!'

"He smiled.

"'Not that door, Madame. I must inform you that the solemn engagement you have signed can only be set aside by a special dispensation—which will not readily be granted. Your signature, in fact, validates what is in some sort a letter of *cachet*—another little privilege, although mediæval, which is still hereditary in the family into which you chose to enter—a privilege like many of those attached to us, disused but never abrogated.' He retained his terrible smile. She stood, bleached to her trembling lips, staring at him. 'I am afraid that you cannot again go out by that door, which would lead you once more into the world of sin. I may say, Madame, that I anticipated this decision which does honour to your conscience—and took measures to have you suitably escorted to your new sphere of life.'

"With a brusque movement he pulled aside the wall of screens. Behind them —piously telling their beads—were a priest and two nuns.

"Eulalie went down in a dead faint upon the floor. They carried her out—very reverently and tenderly."

With a brusque movement he pulled aside the wall of screens. Behind them—piously telling their beads—were a priest and two nuns.

MORDAUNT ceased, tossed the end of his cigar into my fireplace.

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "What a finish!"

"That's not quite the finish," said Mordaunt. "Next day the old Duca di San Durato shot himself."

"Shot himself?"

"The poor devil was in love with her himself. Sent a note to old Lenormand, asking his pardon." Mordaunt got up, reached for his hat and coat. "There was damn nearly another suicide, too," he said, brusquely. "Good night!"

Miss Helen Wills as an Artist

PARTICULAR interest attaches to the accompanying lively little sketches of Mlle. Suzanne Lenglen and Mlle. Diddie Vlasto, the first two women tennis players of France. For they are the work of Miss Helen Wills, the young American girl champion.

The surprising fact that Miss Wills is an artist with the pencil as well as with the racket requires no emphasis. The sketches tell their own story. Yet it is interesting to study them, not only because they are the work of a promising young art student—one of whose objects in visiting Europe this season was to continue her art training—but also because they are first-hand impressions of famous tennis players in action, produced by the pencil of their most brilliant opponent.

Although it may perhaps be said that Miss Wills has not advanced so far in the world of art as she has in the world of tennis, the degree of success which she has attained in these particularly difficult figure subjects reveals that she is by no means a novice. Progress is probably only a matter of time and practice.

Apparently the drawings themselves are imbued with something of the personality of the artist-tennis-champion, for when they were recently shown to Miss Norah Schlegel, the well-known British woman illustrator—the signature of Miss Wills having been carefully covered up—Miss Schlegel made the following comments :—

"They are very bright and very vigorous little sketches—so vigorous, in fact, that I should imagine them to be the work either of a man or of a modern young woman with

A vigorous study of Mlle. Lenglen at the finish of a back-hand drive.

a very forceful personality. Although they are obviously drawn by a student they reveal a promising originality of treatment.

"What impresses me particularly, however, is the determined manner in which the young artist has tackled the most difficult portions of the figure. It is evident that they are serious studies, and not made 'just for fun.' I should imagine that the person who drew them, besides having a knowledge of lawn-tennis, is a stickler for accuracy, because in one or two instances there are deliberate attempts to draw exceptionally difficult positions of the hands which a 'shirker' would have studiously avoided."

When the identity of the artist was disclosed Miss Schlegel was intensely interested.

"Well, I think they are awfully good," she remarked. "Now, without revising my remarks, I would like to add that, to my mind, her attempts to draw the hands gripping the racket are very plucky. In art, as in tennis, the good 'shots'—even when they don't quite 'come off'—are worthy of the greatest appreciation."

Mr. John Hassall, R.I., the popular poster-artist, studied the sketches for quite a long time before he ventured an opinion.

"They are very interesting and, for a student, quite good," he remarked after a while. "It is evident that Miss Wills has made a careful study of the play of the muscles in motion, and also that she has an eye for composition. What interests me most of all, however, is the manner in which she has attempted to convey a sense of motion by drawing a series of curved lines behind each of the figures. Take the sketch of Mlle. Vlasto, for instance. The swish of the racket, the swing of the arms, and the swirl of the skirt are definitely suggested by those lines. Remove them and the figure would lose much of its vigour. The method is somewhat primitive—I imagine that a child, or a Red Indian, might strive to depict motion by similar means—but it is certainly effective. All the same, a serious student should understand that sound and motion cannot be drawn. This adding of extraneous lines is only a 'trick'—a pictorial illusion. It is artful—but it is not art.

Another lively impression depicting "Suzanne" in the act of volleying.

"However, the sketches are very promising, and if Miss Wills were a pupil of mine I should advise her to 'stick to it.'"

Mr. Percy V. Bradshaw, the Principal of the Press Art School, appeared not in the least surprised to learn that the American

girl tennis champion had developed a talent for drawing.

"In my experience," he said, "quite a number of people who are brilliant in one direction have revealed considerable ability in another. It is only natural that those who have that 'infinite capacity for taking pains' which makes for exceptional success in sport, art, or commerce should apply it to their hobbies. Miss Wills probably takes her art quite as seriously as she does her tennis.

"Whilst it is evident that these sketches are the work of a student, it is also apparent that Miss Wills has passed the elementary stage. An attempt to suggest the grace of Suzanne, and the beauty of many tennis poses, was emphatically not a task for an untrained amateur.

"I fancy that Miss Wills, the champion tennis player, must have found it difficult to satisfy Miss Wills the artist. There were many poses which would have suggested good Art—and very poor tennis; but she has succeeded in producing sketches that are both accurate and artistic.

"I think those loose, background lines indicate very clearly the poses and compositions at which the young artist has aimed. 'Diddie Vlasto,' in particular, has fitted very helpfully into her 'frame.' I like the movement, the precision, and the sureness of this sketch.

"The studies of Suzanne are, in some respects, better drawn, but they are a great deal more worried. If Miss Wills had succeeded in drawing adequately that right arm and racket in the back-hand volley she would be a great 'draughtsman.' However, the left arm is very sensitively observed, and is, I think, the best bit of drawing in the three examples.

"A captious critic might find fault with the drawing of the right hand in each of these three sketches. But anybody who has ever attempted to draw a foreshortened hand holding a foreshortened racket will appreciate the difficulty of the task. Personally, next time I see Miss Wills performing wonders at Wimbledon or elsewhere I shall add something to my usual applause."

Mlle. Vlasto—a particularly graceful and well-balanced sketch.

A Slice of Life

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE.

THE conversation in the bar-parlour of the Anglers' Rest had drifted round to the subject of the Arts: and somebody asked if that film-serial, "The Vicissitudes of Vera," which they were showing down at the Bijou Dream, was worth seeing.

"It's very good," said Miss Postlethwaite, our courteous and efficient barmaid, who is a prominent first-nighter. "It's about a mad professor who gets a girl into his toils and tries to turn her into a lobster."

"Tries to turn her into a lobster?" echoed we, surprised.

"Yes, sir. Into *a* lobster. It seems he collected thousands and thousands of lobsters and mashed them up and boiled down the juice from their glands and was just going to inject it into Vera Dalrymple's spinal column when Jack Frobisher broke into the house and stopped him."

"Why did he do that?"

"Because he didn't want the girl he loved to be turned into a lobster."

"What we mean," said we, "is why did the professor want to turn the girl into a lobster?"

"He had a grudge against her."

This seemed plausible, and we thought it over for a while. Then one of the company shook his head disapprovingly.

"I don't like stories like that," he said. "They aren't true to life."

"Pardon me, sir," said a voice. And we were aware of Mr. Mulliner in our midst.

"Excuse me interrupting what may be a private discussion," said Mr. Mulliner, "but I chanced to overhear the recent remarks, and you, sir, have opened up a subject on which I happen to hold strong views—to wit, the question of what is and what is not true to life. How can we, with our limited experience, answer that question? For all we know, at this very moment hundreds of young women all over the country may be in the process of being turned into lobsters. Forgive my warmth, but I have suffered a good deal from this sceptical attitude of mind which is so prevalent nowadays. I have even met people who refused to believe my story about my brother Wilfred, purely because it was a little out of the ordinary run of the average man's experience."

Considerably moved, Mr. Mulliner ordered a hot Scotch with a slice of lemon.

"What happened to your brother Wilfred? Was he turned into a lobster?"

"No," said Mr. Mulliner, fixing his honest blue eyes on the speaker, "he was not. It would be perfectly easy for me to pretend that he was turned into a lobster; but I have always made it a practice—and I always shall make it a practice—to speak nothing but the bare truth. My brother Wilfred simply had a rather curious adventure."

MY brother Wilfred (said Mr. Mulliner) is the clever one of the family. Even as a boy he was always messing about with chemicals, and at the University he devoted his time entirely to research. The result was that while still quite a young man he had won an established reputation as the inventor of what are known to the trade as Mulliner's Magic Marvels—a general term embracing the Raven Gipsy Face-Cream, the Snow of the Mountains Lotion, and many other preparations, some designed exclusively for the toilet, others of a curative nature, intended to alleviate the many ills the flesh is heir to.

Naturally, he was a very busy man: and

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it is to this absorption in his work that I attribute the fact that, though—like all the Mulliners—a man of striking personal charm, he had reached his thirty-first year without ever having been involved in an affair of the heart. I remember him telling me once that he simply had no time for girls.

But we all fall sooner or late, and these strong, concentrated men harder than any. While taking a brief holiday one year at Cannes, he met a Miss Angela Purdue, who was staying at his hotel, and she bowled him over completely.

She was one of these jolly, outdoor girls; and Wilfred has told me that what attracted him first about her was her wholesome, sunburned complexion. In fact, he told Miss Purdue the same thing when, shortly after he had proposed and been accepted, she asked him in her girlish way what it was that had first made him begin to love her.

"It's such a pity," said Miss Purdue, "that the sunburn fades so soon. I do wish I knew some way of keeping it."

Even in his moments of holiest emotion Wilfred never forgot that he was a business man.

"You should try Mulliner's Raven Gipsy Face-Cream," he said. "It comes in two sizes—the small (or half-crown) jar and the large jar at seven shillings and sixpence. The large jar contains three and a-half times as much as the small jar. It is applied nightly with a small sponge before retiring to rest. Testimonials have been received from numerous members of the aristocracy and may be examined at the office by any *bonâ-fide* inquirer."

"Is it really good?"

"I invented it," said Wilfred, simply.

She looked at him adoringly.

"How clever you are! Any girl ought to be proud to marry you."

"Oh, well," said Wilfred, with a modest wave of his hand.

"All the same, my guardian is going to be terribly angry when I tell him we're engaged."

"Why?"

"I inherited the Purdue millions when my uncle died, you see, and my guardian has always wanted me to marry his son, Percy."

Wilfred kissed her fondly, and laughed a defiant laugh.

"Jer mong feesh der solar," he said, lightly.

BUT, some days after his return to London, whither the girl had preceded him, he had occasion to recall her words. As he sat in his study, musing on a preparation to cure the pip in canaries, a card was brought to him.

"Sir Jasper ffinch-ffarrowmere, Bart.," he read. The name was strange to him.

"Show the gentleman in," he said. And presently there entered a very stout man with a broad, pink face. It was a face whose natural expression should, Wilfred felt, have been jovial, but at the moment it was grave.

"Sir Jasper Finch-Farrowmere?" said Wilfred.

"ffinch-ffarrowmere," corrected the visitor, his sensitive ear detecting the capital letters.

"Ah, yes. You spell it with two small f's."

"Four small f's."

"And to what do I owe the honour——"

"I am Angela Purdue's guardian."

"How do you do? A whisky-and-soda?"

"I thank you, no. I am a total abstainer. I found that alcohol had a tendency to increase my weight, so I gave it up. I have also given up butter, potatoes, soups of all kinds and—— However," he broke off, the fanatic gleam which comes into the eyes of all fat men who are describing their system of diet fading away, "this is not a social call, and I must not take up your time with idle talk. I have a message for you, Mr. Mulliner. From Angela."

"Bless her!" said Wilfred. "Sir Jasper, I love that girl with a fervour which increases daily."

"Is that so?" said the baronet. "Well, what I came to say was, it's all off."

"What?"

"All off. She sent me to say that she had thought it over and wanted to break the engagement."

Wilfred's eyes narrowed. He had not forgotten what Angela had said about this man wanting her to marry his son. He gazed piercingly at his visitor, no longer deceived by the superficial geniality of his appearance. He had read too many detective stories where the fat, jolly, red-faced man turns out a fiend in human shape to be a ready victim to appearances.

"Indeed?" he said, coldly. "I should prefer to have this information from Miss Purdue's own lips."

"She won't see you. But, anticipating this attitude on your part, I brought a letter from her. You recognize the writing?"

Wilfred took the letter. Certainly, the hand was Angela's: and the meaning of the words he read unmistakable. Nevertheless, as he handed the missive back, there was a hard smile on his face.

"There is such a thing as writing a letter under compulsion," he said.

The baronet's pink face turned mauve.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"What I say."

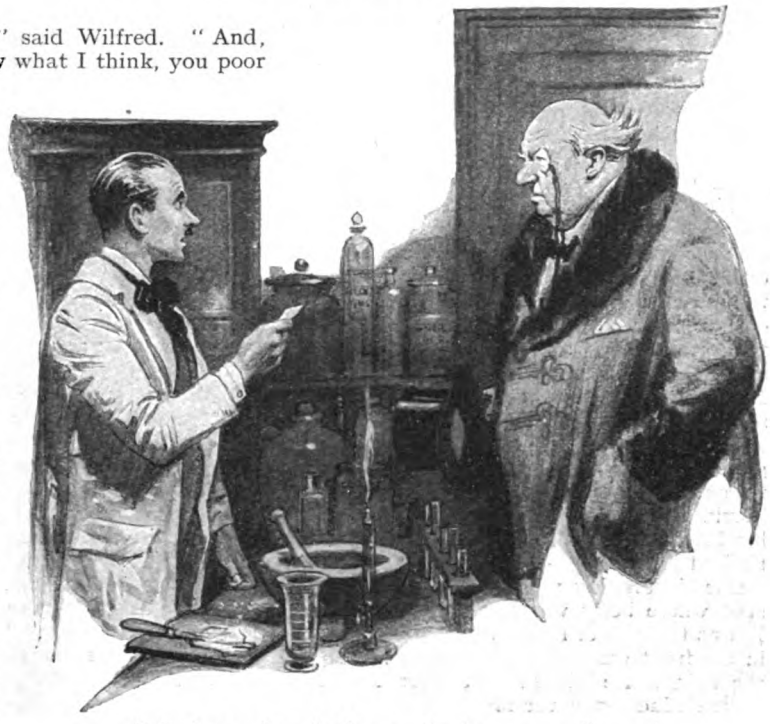
"Are you insinuating——"

"Yes, I am."

"Pooh, sir!"

"Pooh to you!" said Wilfred. "And, if you want to know what I think, you poor ffish, I believe your name is spelled with a capital F, like anybody else's."

Stung to the quick, the baronet turned on his heel and left the room without another word.



"And to what do I owe the honour——"
"I am Angela Purdue's guardian."
"How do you do? A whisky-and-soda?"

ALTHOUGH he had given up his life to chemical research, Wilfred Mulliner was no mere dreamer. He could be the man of action when necessity demanded. Scarcely had his visitor left when he was on his way to the Senior Test-Tubes, the famous chemists' club in St. James's. There, consulting Kelly's "County Families," he learned that Sir Jasper's address was ffinch Hall in Yorkshire. He had found out all he wanted to know. It was at ffinch Hall, he decided, that Angela must now be immured.

For that she was being immured somewhere he had no doubt. That letter, he was positive, had been written by her under stress of threats. The writing was Angela's, but he declined to believe that she was responsible for the phraseology and sentiments. He remembered reading a story where the heroine was forced into courses which she would not otherwise have contemplated by the fact that somebody was standing over her with a flask of vitriol. Possibly this was what that bounder of a baronet had done to Angela.

Considering this possibility, he did not blame her for what she had said about him, Wilfred, in the second paragraph of her note. Nor did he reproach her for signing herself "Yrs truly, A. Purdue." Naturally, when baronets are threatening to pour vitriol down her neck, a refined and sensitive young girl cannot pick her words. This sort of thing must of necessity interfere with the selection of the *mot juste*.

That afternoon, Wilfred was in a train on his way to Yorkshire. That evening, he was in the ffinch Arms in the village of which Sir Jasper was the squire. That night, he was in the gardens of ffinch Hall, prowling softly round the house, listening.

And presently, as he prowled, there came to his ears from an upper window a sound that made him stiffen like a statue and clench his hands till the knuckles stood out white under the strain.

It was the sound of a woman sobbing.

WILFRED spent a sleepless night, but by morning he had formed his plan of action. I will not weary you with a description of the slow and tedious steps by which he first made the acquaintance of Sir Jasper's valet, who was an habitué of the village inn, and then by careful stages won the man's confidence with friendly words and beer. Suffice it to say that, about a week later, Wilfred had induced this man with bribes to leave suddenly on the plea of an aunt's illness, supplying—so as to cause his employer no inconvenience—a cousin to take his place.

This cousin, as you will have guessed, was Wilfred himself. But a very different Wilfred from the dark-haired, clean-cut

young scientist who had revolutionized the world of chemistry a few months before by proving that H2O+b3g4z7—m9z8=g6f5p3x. Before leaving London on what he knew would be a dark and dangerous enterprise, Wilfred had taken the precaution of calling in at a well-known costumier's and buying a red wig. He had also purchased a pair of blue spectacles: but for the *rôle* which he had now undertaken these were, of course, useless. A blue-spectacled valet could not but have aroused suspicion in the most guileless baronet. All that Wilfred did, therefore, in the way of preparation, was to don the wig, shave off his moustache, and treat his face to a light coating of the Raven Gipsy Face-Cream. This done, he set out for ffinch Hall.

Externally, ffinch Hall was one of those gloomy, sombre country-houses which seem to exist only for the purpose of having horrid crimes committed in them. Even in his brief visit to the grounds, Wilfred had noticed fully half-a-dozen places which seemed incomplete without a cross indicating spot where body was found by the police. It was the sort of house where ravens croak in the front garden just before the death of the heir, and shrieks ring out from behind barred windows in the night.

Nor was its interior more cheerful. And, as for the personnel of the domestic staff, that was less exhilarating than anything else about the place. It consisted of an aged cook who, as she bent over her cauldrons, looked like something out of a travelling company of "Macbeth," touring the smaller towns of the North, and Murgatroyd, the butler, a huge, sinister man with a cast in one eye and an evil light in the other.

Many men, under these conditions, would have been daunted. But not Wilfred Mulliner. Apart from the fact that, like all the Mulliners, he was as brave as a lion, he had come expecting something of this nature. He settled down to his duties and kept his eyes open, and before long his vigilance was rewarded.

One day, as he lurked about the dim-lit passage-ways, he saw Sir Jasper coming up the stairs with a laden tray in his hands. It contained a toast-rack, a half-bot. of white wine, pepper, salt, veg., and in a covered dish something which Wilfred, sniffing cautiously, decided was a cutlet.

Lurking in the shadows, he followed the baronet to the top of the house. Sir Jasper paused at a door on the second floor. He knocked. The door opened, a hand was stretched forth, the tray vanished, the door closed, and the baronet moved away.

So did Wilfred. He had seen what he had wanted to see, discovered what he had wanted to discover. He returned to the servants' hall, and under the gloomy eyes of Murgatroyd began to shape his plans.

"Where you been?" demanded the butler, suspiciously.

"Oh, hither and thither," said Wilfred, with a well-assumed airiness.

Murgatroyd directed a menacing glance at him.

"You'd better stay where you belong," he said, in his thick, growling voice. "There's things in this house that don't want seeing."

"Ah!" agreed the cook, dropping an onion in the cauldron.

Wilfred could not repress a shudder.

But, even as he shuddered, he was conscious of a certain relief. At least, he reflected, they were not starving his darling. That cutlet had smelt uncommonly good: and, if the bill of fare was always maintained at this level, she had nothing to complain of in the catering.

But his relief was short-lived. What, after all, he asked himself, are cutlets to a girl who is imprisoned in a locked room of a sinister country-house and is being forced to marry a man she does not love? Practically nothing. When the heart is sick, cutlets merely alleviate, they do not cure. Fiercely Wilfred told himself that, come what might, few days should pass before he found the key to that locked door and bore away his love to freedom and happiness.

The only obstacle in the way of this scheme was that it was plainly going to be a matter of the greatest difficulty to find the key. That night, when his employer dined, Wilfred searched his room thoroughly. He found nothing. The key, he was forced to conclude, was kept on the baronet's person.

Then how to secure it?

It is not too much to say that Wilfred Mulliner was nonplussed. The brain which had electrified the world of Science by discovering that if you mixed a stiffish oxygen and potassium and added a splash of trinitrotoluol and a spot of old brandy you got something that could be sold in America as champagne at a hundred and fifty dollars the case, had to confess itself baffled.

TO attempt to analyse the young man's emotions, as the next week dragged itself by, would be merely morbid. Life cannot, of course, be all sunshine: and in relating a story like this, which is a slice of life, one must pay as much attention to shade as to light: nevertheless, it would be tedious were I to describe to you in detail the soul-torments which afflicted Wilfred Mulliner as day followed day and no solution to the problem presented itself. You are all intelligent men, and you can

picture to yourselves how a high-spirited young fellow, deeply in love, must have felt; knowing that the girl he loved was languishing in what practically amounted to a dungeon, though situated on an upper floor, and chafing at his inability to set her free.

His eyes became sunken. His cheek-bones stood out. He lost weight. And so noticeable was this change in his physique that Sir Jasper ffinch-ffarrowmere commented on it one evening in tones of unconcealed envy.

"How the devil, Straker," he said—for this was the pseudonym under which Wilfred was passing, "do you manage to keep so thin? Judging by the weekly books, you eat like a starving Esquimaux, and yet you don't put on weight. Now I, in addition to knocking off butter and potatoes, have started drinking hot unsweetened lemon-juice each night before retiring: and yet, damme," he said—for, like all baronets, he was careless in his language, "I weighed myself this morning, and I was up another six ounces. What's the explanation?"

"Yes, Sir Jasper," said Wilfred, mechanically.

"What the devil do you mean, Yes, Sir Jasper?"

"No, Sir Jasper."

The baronet wheezed plaintively.

"I've been studying this matter closely," he said, "and it's one of the seven wonders of the world. Have you ever seen a fat valet? Of course not. Nor has anybody else. There is no such thing as a fat valet. And yet there is scarcely a moment during the day when a valet is not eating. He rises at six-thirty, and at seven is having coffee and buttered toast. At eight, he breakfasts off porridge, cream, eggs, bacon, jam, bread, butter, more eggs, more bacon, more jam, more tea, and more butter,

"Where you been?" demanded the butler, suspiciously.

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finishing up with a slice of cold ham and a sardine. At eleven o'clock he has his 'elevenses,' consisting of coffee, cream, more bread, and more butter. At one, luncheon —a hearty meal, replete with every form of starchy food and lots of beer. If he can get at the port, he has port. At three, a snack. At four, another snack. At five, tea and buttered toast. At seven—dinner, probably with floury potatoes, and certainly with lots more beer. At nine, another snack. And at ten-thirty he retires to bed, taking with him a glass of milk and a plate of biscuits to keep himself from getting hungry in the night. And yet he remains as slender as a string-bean, while I, who have been dieting for years, tip the beam at two hundred and seventeen pounds and am growing a third and supplementary chin. These are mysteries, Straker."

"Yes, Sir Jasper."

"Well, I'll tell you one thing," said the baronet. "I'm getting down one of those indoor Turkish Bath cabinet-affairs from London; and if that doesn't do the trick, I give up the struggle."

THE indoor Turkish Bath duly arrived and was unpacked; and it was some three nights later that Wilfred, brooding in the servants' hall, was aroused from his reverie by Murgatroyd.

"Here," said Murgatroyd. "Wake up. Sir Jasper's calling you."

"Calling me what?" asked Wilfred, coming to himself with a start.

"Calling you very loud," growled the butler.

It was indeed so. From the upper regions of the house there was proceeding a series of sharp yelps, evidently those of a man in mortal stress. Wilfred was reluctant to interfere in any way if, as seemed probable, his employer was dying in agony; but he was a conscientious man, and it was his duty, while in this sinister house, to perform the work for which he was paid. He hurried up the stairs; and, entering Sir Jasper's bedroom, perceived the baronet's crimson face protruding from the top of the indoor Turkish bath.

"So you've come at last!" cried Sir Jasper. "Look here, when you put me into this infernal contrivance just now, what did you do to the dashed thing?"

"Nothing beyond what was indicated in the printed pamphlet accompanying the machine, Sir Jasper. Following the instructions, I slid Rod A into Groove B, fastening with Catch C——"

"Well, you must have made a mess of it, somehow. The thing's stuck. I can't get out."

"You can't?" cried Wilfred.

"No. And the bally apparatus is getting considerably hotter than the hinges of the Inferno." I must apologize for Sir Jasper's language, but you know what baronets are. "I'm being cooked to a crisp."

A sudden flash of light seemed to blaze upon Wilfred Mulliner.

"I will release you, Sir Jasper——"

"Well, hurry up, then."

"On one condition." Wilfred fixed him with a piercing gaze. "First, I must have the key."

"There isn't a key, you idiot. It doesn't lock. It just clicks when you slide Gadget D into Thingummybob E."

"The key I require is that of the room in which you are holding Angela Purdue a prisoner."

"What the devil do you mean? Ouch!"

"I will tell you what I mean, Sir Jasper ffinch-ffarrowmere. I am Wilfred Mulliner!"

"Don't be an ass. Wilfred Mulliner has black hair. Yours is red. You must be thinking of someone else."

"This is a wig," said Wilfred. "By Clarkson." He shook a menacing finger at the baronet. "You little thought, Sir Jasper ffinch-ffarrowmere, when you embarked on this dastardly scheme, that Wilfred Mulliner was watching your every move. I guessed your plans from the start. And now is the moment when I checkmate them. Give me that key, you Fiend."

"ffiend," corrected Sir Jasper, automatically.

"I am going to release my darling, to take her away from this dreadful house, to marry her by special licence as soon as it can legally be done."

In spite of his sufferings, a ghastly laugh escaped Sir Jasper's lips.

"You are, are you!"

"I am."

"Yes, you are!"

"Give me the key."

"I haven't got it, you chump. It's in the door."

"Ha, ha!"

"It's no good saying 'Ha, ha!' It is in the door. On Angela's side of the door."

"A likely story! But I cannot stay here wasting time. If you will not give me the key, I shall go up and break in the door."

"Do!" Once more the baronet laughed like a tortured soul. "And see what she'll say."

Wilfred could make nothing of this last remark. He could, he thought, imagine very clearly what Angela would say. He could picture her sobbing on his chest, murmuring that she knew he would come, that she had never doubted him for an instant. He leaped for the door.

" Here ! Hi ! Aren't you going to let me out ? "

" Presently," said Wilfred. " Keep cool."

He raced up the stairs.

" Angela," he cried, pressing his lips against the panel. " Angela ! "

" Who's that ? " answered a well-remembered voice from within.

" It is I—Wilfred. I am going to burst open the door. Stand clear of the gates."

He drew back a few paces, and hurled himself at the woodwork. There was a grinding crash, as the lock gave. And Wilfred, staggering on, found himself in a room so dark that he could see nothing.

" Angela, where are you ? "

" I'm here. And I'd like to know why you are, after that letter I wrote you. Some men," continued the strangely-cold voice, " do not seem to know how to take a hint."

Wilfred staggered, and would have fallen had he not clutched at his forehead.

" That letter ? " he stammered. " You surely didn't mean what you wrote in that letter ? "

" I meant every word, and I wish I had put in more."

" But—but—but—— But don't you love me, Angela ? "

A hard, mocking laugh rang through the room.

" Love you ? Love the man who recommended me to try Mulliner's Raven Gipsy Face-Cream ! "

" What do you mean ? "

" I will tell you what I mean. Wilfred Mulliner, look on your handiwork ! "

The room became suddenly flooded with light. And there, standing with her hand on the switch, stood Angela—a queenly, lovely figure, in whose radiant beauty the sternest critic would have noted but one flaw—the fact that she was piebald.

Wilfred gazed at her with adoring eyes.

" Give me that key, you fiend ! "

Her face was partly brown and partly white, and on her snowy neck there were patches of sepia that looked like the thumb-prints you find on the pages of books in the Free Library: but he thought her the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. He longed to fold her in his arms: and but for the fact that her eyes told him that she would undoubtedly land an upper-cut on him if he tried it he would have done so.

"Yes," she went on. "This is what you have made of me, Wilfred Mulliner—you and that awful stuff you call the Raven Gipsy Face-Cream. This is the skin you loved to touch! I took your advice and bought one of the large jars at seven-and-six, and see the result! Barely twenty-four hours after the first application, I could have walked into any circus and named my own terms as the Spotted Princess of the Fiji Islands. I fled here to my childhood home, to hide myself. And the first thing that happened"—her voice broke—"was that my favourite hunter shied at me and tried to bite pieces out of his manger: while Ponto, my little dog, whom I have reared from a puppy, caught one sight of my face and is now in the hands of the vet. and unlikely to recover. And it was you, Wilfred Mulliner, who brought this curse upon me!"

Many men would have wilted beneath these searing words, but Wilfred Mulliner merely smiled with infinite compassion and understanding.

"It is quite all right," he said. "I should have warned you, sweetheart, that this occasionally happens in cases where the skin is exceptionally delicate and finely-textured. It can be speedily remedied by an application of the Mulliner Snow of the Mountains Lotion, four shillings the medium-sized bottle."

"Wilfred! Is this true?"

"Perfectly true, dearest. And is this all that stands between us?"

"No!" shouted a voice of thunder.

The butler, scowling horribly, advanced into the room. "Stop!"

Wilfred wheeled sharply. In the doorway stood Sir Jasper ffinch-ffarrowmere. He was swathed in a bath-towel, what was visible of his person being a bright crimson. Behind him, toying with a horse-whip, stood Murgatroyd, the butler.

"You didn't expect to see me, did you?"

"I certainly," replied Wilfred, severely, "did not expect to see you in a lady's presence in a costume like that."

"Never mind my costume." Sir Jasper turned. "Murgatroyd, do your duty!"

The butler, scowling horribly, advanced into the room.

"Stop!" screamed Angela.

"I haven't begun yet, miss," said the butler, deferentially.

"You sha'n't touch Wilfred. I love him."

"What!" cried Sir Jasper. "After all that has happened?"

"Yes. He has explained everything."

A grim frown appeared on the baronet's vermilion face.

"I'll bet he hasn't explained why he left

screamed Angela. "I haven't begun yet, miss," said the butler.

me to be cooked in that infernal Turkish Bath. I was beginning to throw out clouds of smoke when Murgatroyd, faithful fellow, heard my cries and came and released me."

"Though not my work," added the butler.

Wilfred eyed him steadily.

"If," he said, "you used Mulliner's Reduc-o, the recognized specific for obesity, whether in the tabloid form at three shillings the tin, or as a liquid at five-and-six the flask, you would have no need to stew in Turkish Baths. Mulliner's Reduc-o, which contains no injurious chemicals, but is compounded purely of health-giving herbs, is guaranteed to remove excess weight, steadily and without weakening after-effects, at the rate of two pounds a week. As used by the nobility."

The glare of hatred faded from the baronet's eyes.

"Is that a fact?" he whispered.

"It is."

"You guarantee it?"

"All the Mulliner preparations are fully guaranteed."

"My boy!" cried the baronet. He shook Wilfred by the hand. "Take her," he said, brokenly. "And with her my blessing."

A discreet cough sounded in the background.

"You haven't anything, by any chance, sir," asked Murgatroyd, "that's good for lumbago?"

"Mulliner's Ease-o will cure the most stubborn case in six days."

"Bless you, sir, bless you," sobbed Murgatroyd. "Where can I get it?"

"At all chemists."

"It catches me in the small of the back principally, sir."

"It need catch you no longer," said Wilfred.

There is little to add. Murgatroyd is now the most lissom butler in Yorkshire. Sir Jasper's weight is down under the two hundred pounds, and he is thinking of taking up hunting again. Wilfred and Angela are man and wife: and never, I am informed, have the wedding-bells of the old church at ffinch village rung out a blither peal than they did on that June morning when Angela, raising to her love a face on which the brown was as evenly distributed as on an antique walnut table, replied to the clergyman's question, "Wilt thou, Angela, take this Wilfred?" with a shy "I will." They now have two bonny bairns—the small, or Percival, at a preparatory school in Sussex, and the large, or Ferdinand, at Eton.

HERE Mr. Mulliner, having finished his hot Scotch, bade us farewell and took his departure.

A silence followed his exit. The company seemed plunged in deep thought. Then somebody rose.

"Well, good-night all," he said.

It seemed to sum up the situation.

The Rabbit

By
ALBERT KINROSS

Illustrated by
FRANK GILLETT, R.I.

As he began his sorrowful march back to the pavilion he saw a rabbit watching him, or so he fancied. "Two of us," he muttered, mournfully.

"*Il a cassé son œuf,*" said Ned Thatcher, who had been in France during the Great War.

"*Il a cassé son canard,*" said Tom Grainger, a second veteran.

These two inseparables sat on a bench outside the shed which serves the Deerhurst Cricket Club as a pavilion, and watched the game and made appropriate comments in a foreign language. It was one of their hobbies.

Mr. Painter, the player who had broken his "*œuf*" or his "*canard*," as the case might be, was a portly and middle-aged party such as one rarely meets in the field outside of village cricket. But villages are tolerant, and here was Mr. Painter, bat in hand, padded, gloved, and wearing a dark-blue cap with a red lion rampant embroidered, just above its peak; and, moreover, he owned this whole outfit, including the long green bag wherein he stowed his things away.

He had come in at seven wickets down for eighty-six, vowing not to depart till he had seen the hundred hoisted, a stout old fellow with a red face, upon whose arrival the opposing captain had whispered "Rabbits!" The man kept wicket, and Mr. Painter had heard him. He thought it distinctly bad form and worse manners. But these Londoners—what could you expect of them!

Mr. Painter began by poking a short one round to leg for a single, which caused the exclamations in the French language that

have been recorded. He played the next that came to him, and his third was a straight half-volley at which he hit out with all his might—it cleared the hedge and landed in Parr's orchard. He'd show them whether he was a rabbit! "Well hit, sir!" said the wicket-keeper behind him, while on the bench in the shade the two veterans cried "*Un six!*" Ninety was up on the board now and it was "over."

Next Mr. Painter had to run a two and then a three, which almost finished him. He took his new guard puffing and blowing. Yes, he was a bit of a rabbit, he agreed, if being a rabbit meant being a tail-end player who was about past it. He came down on a "low" one viciously, and just in the nick of time. They ran a leg-bye for the next, which brought the hundred up amid yells of rejoicing.

Mr. Painter's next ball was a fastish rising one on the off which he tried to cut. His bat arrived too late; the ball went up in the air; and second slip, with plenty of time, brought off a "sitter." Mr. Painter watched him ruefully. "I ought to have let it alone; I'm not quick enough," was his verdict, as he turned away from the crease and began his sorrowful march back to the pavilion. Under the hedge, on the "off" side from where he had stood, he saw another rabbit, a real brown one, watching him, or so he fancied. With ears a-cock, body erect, it sat up boldly and looked out. It turned as he came closer, it showed the white fluff of its tail, and next was gone back to its burrow. "Two of us," he muttered, mournfully.

Deerhurst won its game that day, in spite of Mr. Painter, who had dropped an easy catch at point, and who, put on to bowl—when in the vein, he bowled the most cunning slows—had been unable to find a length and almost lost the match for them. He packed his bag, and carried it home, feeling sick and heavy. Boy and man, he had played cricket for fifty years now, and he didn't feel like giving up, and he hadn't much else to do in the summer besides gardening. And he could still play—look at that six which had cleared the hedge and landed in Parr's orchard. But sixes were rare now; once—and that not so very long ago, either—fifteen years, perhaps—how time did go!—he had heard himself described as "the terror of the neighbourhood."

MR. PAINTER had been a head-butler, but was now retired. He and his sister, Agnes, a maiden lady, kept house together, a genteel couple, who, including legacies, had done well out of service. There was the villa on the edge

of Deerhurst Common, with its two gates and its little drive, almost like a gentleman's place, and there was the tennis lawn and garden. They hadn't done so badly, and when the old earl died, Painter had given up. Miss Painter had joined him, a timid woman, afraid of tramps and suchlike, but devoted to her garden.

She was busy there now, when he came up the drive, carrying his long green bag.

"How did the match go?" she asked.

"We won," said Mr. Painter.

"And how did you get on yourself?"

"Nothing to boast about."

"Do you know, John——" she began.

"What is it?" he asked, sharply.

"I'd give up cricket if I were you. It makes you so depressed."

After supper, with a glass of sherry before that meal and a glass of port to follow it, and a tankard of bitter in between, he was feeling more cheerful.

"I'm not such a rabbit after all," he said; "you should have seen that six. I've only got to wait for 'em and the runs'll come of themselves. We can't take liberties at our age."

He had said the same last week and the week before, and Miss Painter had agreed with him. She agreed again; and then, "I think we'll really have to keep a dog," she said, "with so many strange people about in August. Though I'm afraid of dogs, and always will be."

Mr. Painter was not listening.

"When I got out," he said, "and was walking back to the pavilion, there was a real rabbit under the hedge, watching me, or so I fancied. Stupid, of course. But queer, wasn't it?"

"As long as it didn't come in my garden and scratch up things," answered Miss Painter; but her brother was yawning after his long day. He lit his pipe, unfolded the county paper, and fell asleep over them.

ON the following Saturday Mr. Painter turned out again, and when they had disposed of the other side for ninety-two, "Put me in last," he said to the cap-

tain, Mr. Noakes; "I've been a bit off colour lately."

"Seventh or eighth," said Mr. Noakes. "There's no telling; you might get some of them sixes."

This pleased Mr. Painter. "I might," he thought, as he sat in the shade and watched the match and anxiously awaited his turn. "I'll go slow, though, and take no liberties; I'll let the runs come and not go after them; that's the way to do it."

"*Vingt-huit pour gagner*," said Ned Thatcher, when the sixth wicket fell.

"*Vingt-sept pour un tie*—what's a tie in French?" asked Tom Grainger.

"*Une cravatte*."

"*Vingt-sept pour une cra atte*—that's a neck-tie, ain't it?"

While this philological argument was in progress, the hour had struck for Mr. Painter to "go slow" and let the runs "come of themselves."

He had marched out bravely and very upright, taken his guard, and stood now in the correct position. "You watch the flight of the ball," he was saying to himself, "and play to the pitch, and then you can't go wrong. And no making up your mind beforehand; each ball on its merits."

Mr. Painter played like a book, unhurried and unhurrying, giving the ball the full face of the bat and leaving the doubtful ones alone. He turned one to leg between square and mid-on, an elegant stroke, and that broke his duck for him. The runs were coming. He played another almost straight, and it flew past mid-off. That was a couple. A big man like himself could hit hard without effort if he only timed them, especially as he used a private bat and not one of the club chance ones. He knew his weapon.

Steadily he played through a second over and then a third, hitting up twos and singles. The pair of French scholars on the bench were growing hopeful; and then Mr. Painter, glancing round to the hedge on his "off" side, discovered the rabbit. It was the same brown rabbit that had been there before, sitting up and watching him, and, "Come over here," it seemed to be saying; "Come over here where you belong, among us, old man, and not up there pretending to play cricket." The wretched creature almost seemed to beckon; and next, before he knew what he had done, Mr. Painter had flung all his good resolutions aside and had hit out wildly, playing over a good length ball that fetched his wicket. Bowled neck and crop, and all on account of that rabbit, or a ridiculous fancy, or both.

"I don't know what's come over me," he muttered, on his way back to the pavilion.

"You ought to have hit out instead of poking about," said Mr. Noakes, "gone for it, straightaway; it's your game."

"I did hit out," said Mr. Painter.

"Chose the wrong one," said Mr. Noakes.

Mr. Painter grunted. How could he tell him about the rabbit and what the rabbit had said, or he had fancied that the rabbit had said?

Deerhurst lost the match by seven runs; but, "You can't win always," as Mr. Painter remarked, discussing matters with his sister in the evening.

"There wouldn't be any sense in it if you did," she comforted him; "but I'd give it up, John, if I were you. You know you must some day, and, besides that, it's dangerous."

"Dangerous!" snorted Mr. Painter.

"Yes; you remember when you came home with a lump on the side of your head as big as a turkey's egg?"

"Well, and what of it?"

"And when Dr. Bradshaw put two stitches where you'd split your hand and charged you five shillings."

"Yes, and I held that catch in spite of it! His lordship always remembered that catch. 'You're a good plucked 'un, Painter,' he used to say. His lordship was a cricketer."

"But not at your age, John."

"It was all the fault of that rabbit," he cried, sullenly; "if it hadn't come out of the hedge and beckoned, I'd have been there now. I'd have won the match for them. Queer thing, that rabbit!"

THE next Saturday Deerhurst played their game away, driving over to Teston in a van, except Mr. Noakes, who had his own two-seater, and Thatcher and Grainger, who shared a motor-cycle.

They won easily and with four wickets to spare, one of which was Mr. Painter's; but he had bowled well and held his two catches, and he was feeling very pleased with himself when he came in.

He found his sister at work with two large boards and a pot of white paint and a pot of black paint and a couple of brushes.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"It's to keep off the hop-pickers," she said, "when they come next month. I'm always frightened."

"They're quite harmless," said Mr. Painter; "and what are you going to do with a couple of boards?"

"Never you mind," said Miss Painter. "Of course we haven't got any dogs, but it'll scare 'em."

Mr. Painter went upstairs to take a hot bath and change into his ordinary clothes and his fat gold watch-chain; and now that he was getting on and felt the weather, he had become one of those elderly men who

play the game in a suit of warm underclothing. But by supper-time he was down again and ready for his glass of sherry.

"Did you see that rabbit again to-day?" asked Miss Painter.

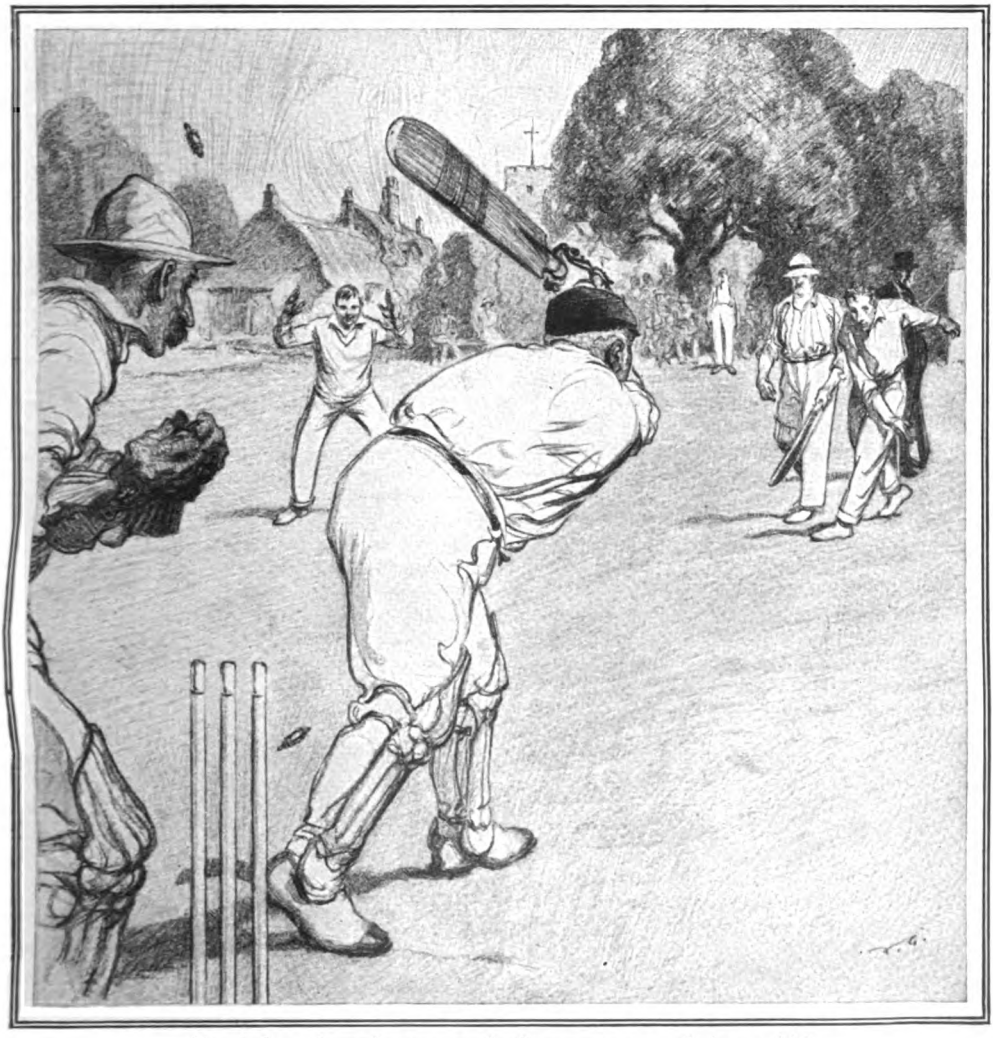
"No; how ridiculous! It was just my fancy; and, of course, he wouldn't come over to Teston, would he?"

"There's no telling," said Miss Painter. "If one imagines things, they sometimes take a real shape. I've been reading a book about it. That explains ghosts, it says, and visions. People get thinking of things and the things materialize."

"That's too deep for me," said Mr. Painter.

The next Saturday, the last match of the month, they played at home, and when Mr. Painter went in to bat, there stood the rabbit, quite bold and plainly. It had come out from under the hedge and here it was, beckoning, as much as to say, "You silly old fool, you're one of us. Come back to your burrow, instead of standing there as though you were a cricketer. You're only a rabbit."

It was too much for Mr. Painter, who spooned up the first ball he received into



Bowled neck and crop, and all on account of that rabbit.

square-leg's hands, a wretched stroke ; and then he went off, bat in hand, to deal with that rabbit. He was in time to see the white fluff of its tail as it disappeared into the hedge, but instead of marching back to the shed that served as a pavilion, he went straight up to the place and marked it by breaking off twigs, and, so as not to make any mistake, he knocked a hole in the hedge with his bat as well. He'd find the place again and get even !

Ned Thatcher and Tom Grainger, on their seat, were wondering, and quite forgot to speak in French this time.

" What's up with him ? " asked Ned.

" Ashamed of himself," said Tom. " Getting out with a stroke like that ; it ain't like him."

" *Il devient un peu long dans le dent*," said Thatcher, reverting once more to their customary game.

" A bit long in the tooth ? " answered Tom Grainger. " *Oui, très long.*"

But Mr. Painter's brain was hard at work. No, it wasn't just a fancy, or something he'd imagined. The rabbit was a real rabbit and had done it on purpose, and this was the second time. There wouldn't be any third time ! But wouldn't there ? This is where Mr. Painter miscalculated.

He stood at point, and here was the rabbit again. He dropped three catches in all and lost the match for Deerhurst ; and when Mr. Noakes had asked him to bowl, he had been clouted all over the field. " It isn't your day out," said Mr. Noakes, relieving him after his second over.

Mr. Painter was glad when the game was done with and there was no more opportunity for fresh disgrace. He went up to Mr. Noakes and apologized, and when that was over and because Mr. Noakes owned the field, " Do you mind if I do a bit of rabbiting here ? " he asked.

" As much as you like ; I'm glad to be rid of the vermin," said Mr. Noakes.

" Vermin ! That's just the right word for it," thought Mr. Painter ; while Mr. Noakes was thinking, " A rabbit going rabbiting—that's rather a good 'un ! "

IN the little drive on that Saturday afternoon Miss Painter had been getting ready for the hop-pickers, of whom she was so much afraid. These came down from London in their hundreds and " infested the neighbourhood," as she put it. The two boards on which she had been busy were now in position, and when Painter came home that evening, carrying his long green bag, he read the notice in white on black, " BEWARE OF THE DOGS." There was a board stuck up at each of the two gates.

" But we haven't got any dogs ! " he shouted to his sister.

" They don't know that," she answered, grimly ; " and how did the game go ? "

" I wish we had a terrier ; I'd have sent it after that rabbit," he replied.

And no more till supper-time, for Mr. Painter was cleaning up his gun ; and after supper, and without waiting for his usual glass of port, he strolled off with it on his shoulder ; across the common and down the lane which led to the cricket-field, and he found the place he had marked in the hedge and went through at the wicket-gate.

There was a thin wood of larch behind the hedge, and in the dusk he looked for rabbit-holes and found half-a-dozen near the place he had marked. " I'll have to borrow Dick Turner's ferrets," he said, " if shooting don't fetch him." Then he went back to the field again, loaded his gun, and waited, sprawling in the grass, with the barrels pointing to the hole he had made in the hedge.

Other rabbits loped in and out, quite unsuspecting. He lay so still there in the twilight ; but nothing, and certainly no large rabbit like his one, came out of the place he had marked in the hedge. However, he shot a couple on general principles and took them home, feeling much better. Perhaps they were friends or relatives of his rabbit and it would be a warning. It was a silly thing to think, but thoughts would come to one.

He went back under a full moon, and early in the dawn of the next morning he was there again. The unsuspicious bunnies were

He gave it both barrels, so as to make sure.

nibbling all along the hedge as he came in, a dozen of them or more. He went to the spot he had chosen last night, flung down his mackintosh, and lay full length in the dewy grass, watching the place he had marked, and waiting. It was much like cricket; it only wanted patience, and there was no one to come out of the hedge and disturb him. He wished that rabbit would come!

He had lain there half an hour when the rabbit poked its head out and looked round. Its body followed, and it was quite a big rabbit, the very image of the one which had sat up and jeered at him. Mr. Painter's heart thumped wildly against his ribs. His forefinger moved to the triggers; the butt was against his shoulder; and he had taken a slow and deliberate aim. He gave it both barrels, so as to make sure. It gave a leap in the air and then lay still. "So that's that," said Mr. Painter. And to make quite sure, and because he liked the sport, morning and evening throughout that week he went there and shot rabbits, giving them away. For Mr. Noakes didn't want them, and Miss Painter couldn't eat them, and no more could he after what they'd done to him.

THE Saturday came, and with it the last match but one of the season. Mr. Painter was another man. He bowled well enough to collect three wickets for seventeen, he held his two catches, and when he went in to bat he was feeling sure of himself.

"Confidence—yes, that's the thing—it's half the battle," he muttered to himself, as the opposing bowler brought his arm round. A full toss to leg—a sheer gift! Mr. Painter hit out at it and it went to the boundary for four. All right so far, and he could hear the applause. There followed a single, which brought him to the other end. No, he wouldn't look round to see if the rabbit was there. He'd keep his eye on the ball or else on his partner. They ran two byes and next it was "over."

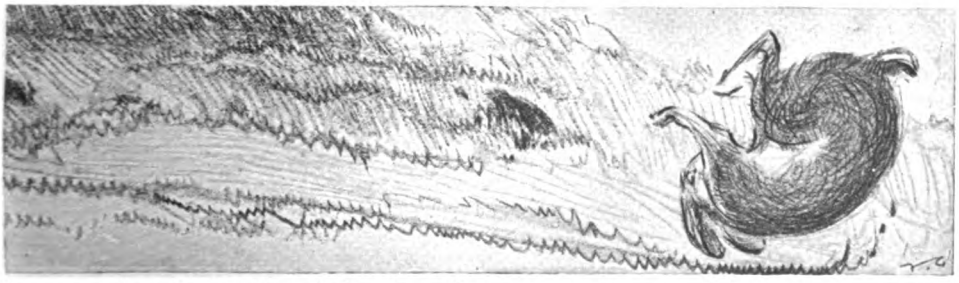
The first three balls Mr. Painter played carefully, looking neither to the right nor to the left; the fourth was a perfect length for his one-time celebrated square cut, which was as good as a drive. He pivoted on his heel and brought his bat down, timing it to the fraction, and the ball flew past point and only stopped at the hedge. And there sat the rabbit, watching him. Not respectfully, as it ought to have done, but more insulting than ever.

"A flash in the pan, that one. It came off, but you couldn't do it again. As good as a fluke," it seemed to be shouting. "You'll be out the next one. Why don't you come down here, where you belong?"

The rabbit was beckoning again in the sight of the whole field. Mr. Painter couldn't take his mind off it and barely his eyes. The next ball was a foot wide of the leg stump and went past him. The next was a straight and shortish "shooter," not too fast. There was time to come down on it, but he was thinking of the rabbit and missed his chance; that rabbit which ought to have been dead and eaten, but which somehow had survived to torture him again. He was out, not too disgracefully, but just out, like any other rabbit; and there sat the real one, jeering at him worse than ever.

"What did I tell you?" it seemed to be saying. "You're far too old; you've got no wind, your eyesight's rotten, you're slow-footed, and you don't believe in yourself, really, although you pretend. Come over here and let some youngster have his chance. You're blocking the way; you're a nuisance. And you can't field; you're stiff and fat, and you funk a real hard one. And you can't bowl either—no zipp in it, like there used to be." How did the rabbit know all these things, which he owned he had said to himself, almost word for word, when feeling the years creep over him.

Mr. Painter was close to the hedge now. Just as before, he took that way, instead of marching straight back to the pavilion, and, just as before, the rabbit had disappeared, diving into the hedge, at the same spot, the very same spot, that he had



It gave a leap in the air and then lay still.

marked last Saturday and shot at on the Sunday morning. A sudden fear invaded Mr. Painter. Perhaps, as his sister had suggested, it wasn't a real rabbit after all, but the spook of a rabbit. No, that was nonsense! He'd borrow Dick Turner's ferrets and clear that larch wood, even if it took him the whole week.

"Two good shots of yours," said Mr. Noakes, as he rambled back to the pavilion; "I thought you were going to stay."

"So I would have," Mr. Painter began, "but——" No, he couldn't explain. Mr. Noakes would think he had gone crazy if he told him about the rabbit.

"*Il nous a donné un lapin*," said one of the French scholars on the bench.

"*Et nous aussi*." It was true, for Mr. Painter had been giving away rabbits all the week.

"*C'était son frère*," said Tom Grainger.

"*Non, c'était sa sœur*."

They argued whether it was his brother or sister, or father or grandmother, that he had presented to them, and then went back to the game which they were watching.

'THERE'LL be some ferrets to beware of as well as the dogs," said Mr. Painter, when he came home that evening. "I'm going up to Dick Turner to borrow his. That rabbit was out again; I thought I'd done for him."

"Hop-pickers don't know what ferrets are, but they understand dogs. I like seeing them go by here and read the notices. One came up for a bucket of cold water this afternoon, a woman. 'Is those dogs chained up?' she asked; and I said, 'I think so.' You should have seen her hurry off when she'd got her pail filled!" and Miss Painter chuckled.

But Painter was hardly interested in her doings, just as she was barely interested in his.

After supper he sought out Dick Turner and came back with the ferrets in their wired box; a brace of them, long, slinky things, with red eyes, that gave Miss Painter what she called "the creeps."

Now, instead of evenings and early morning, when the enemy came out to feed, he could go rabbiting all day. The ferrets went into the holes, the rabbits ran out squealing; and there stood Mr. Painter with his shotgun. Bang-bang-bang, it went, with intervals for lunch and tea. He had cleared the wood by the Thursday. Not the ghost of a rabbit left! And there had been three which might or might not have been his tormentor, big ones, just like the fellow that had sat up outside the hedge and jeered. He sent these to the Cottage Hospital, with "Mr. Noakes's compliments," and Mr. Noakes thanked him for clearing the wood. "Now we'll see," said Mr. Painter.

When he turned out again for Deerhurst on the Saturday, it was the last match of the season and there would be no more cricket that year.

The other side won the toss and went in first and made one hundred and forty-two, which wanted some getting on that wicket, and Mr. Noakes wasn't too confident. And Mr. Painter hadn't bowled exactly well, but he hadn't bowled badly. Most of that afternoon he had been wondering: was the rabbit done for, or would it come out again? He had looked over to the hedge anxiously from time to time. But no rabbit. Of course, he had cleared the wood as clean as a whistle.

Mr. Noakes himself was in at the other end when Mr. Painter's turn came along. Seven wickets were down for fifty-three and it looked hopeless. The captain had played the right game, slow and careful. He could keep his end up if the other fellows would get the runs. But Tom Grainger had failed, and Ned Thatcher had failed, and so had Wilmot, and ninety more were wanted, and there was only Painter and a couple of worse rabbits than he.

"Take it easy," said Mr. Noakes; but his partner was watching the hedge. No rabbit! He'd finished with him. The blighter was dead and eaten. Mr. Painter felt twenty years younger, and just to show everybody how he felt, he stepped out and hit three fours, exactly like he used to in the old days when he and his master, the earl, went in first for Heronden Court. Bang-bang-bang, went those three fours, and Mr. Noakes kept on yelling: "Well hit!" But that was only a beginning; for Mr. Painter felt as though a weight or a curse had been lifted. What did he care for those young whippersnappers of bowlers! He showed them the "draw," an old stroke between the batsman's legs that nobody used now, or had ever seen most likely. He lifted one clean on to the roof of the pavilion, where it dropped with a crash; he missed a baby in a perambulator by inches; and

"*Il nous a donné un lapin,*" said one of the French scholars on the bench.

he laid out the square-leg umpire and the ball cannoned off him to the boundary. Deerhurst was howling with joy now. They had passed the hundred, and Mr. Noakes kept his end up and Mr. Painter was still undefeated. He looked again at the hedge. No sign of the rabbit ; and even if there were, he wouldn't care now. He was back with his old self again, singing his swan-song, most likely ; but there it was. One went soaring off to long-on ; would the fellow catch it, or would it go over his head ? It went over the fence into the allotments. A sixer. " Well hit ! " cried Mr. Noakes, who was himself playing more freely, though still taking no chances. Mr. Painter steered one through the slips, and then another. " Pretty stroke !" yelled Ned Thatcher, forgetting to talk French. None of these youngsters knew what Mr. Painter had been in his heyday, his great prime, but now they could guess. And then Mr. Noakes got out, with twelve runs wanted and one blind-swiper and one silly scratcher to come in. " When Mr. Painter calls you, run," said Mr. Noakes ; " that's all you've got to do."

Mr. Painter called at once, to everybody's surprise, including the blind-swiper, who had shut his eyes and mis-mowed the ball to " cover " ; but he did as he was told and just reached home, and so did Mr. Painter. He had got the bowling now and he clung to it. " Two," he yelled, and they ran a two ; " One," and it was " over." They could have made a couple out of it, but one was enough for Mr. Painter. And there he stood, getting his wind back and panting and puffing, and the umpire said it was the last over and three minutes to go.

Mr. Painter recovered his wind, and next he hit a four and then a six, an uppish shot, clean over the spot near the hedge where the rabbit had sat, and the match was won. Just on the stroke of time and in the very last over. He felt he was going to drop dead there and then. Deerhurst had put on ninety-one and he'd made sixty-nine of them, and here he stood, " not out," and the match was won.

The umpire pulled up the stumps and pocketed the bails, and everybody, friend or foe, applauded Mr. Painter, who raised the old cap with the red embroidered lion that had once belonged to his master. He looked towards the hedge, and there sat the rabbit, or was it only his fancy ? He looked again, and the rabbit was capering and applauding more wildly than anybody.

This time Mr. Painter walked straight back to the pavilion.

"Well played, indeed!" said Mr. Noakes.

"*Bien joué, monsieur,*" said Ned Thatcher.

"*Écoutez-écoutez,*" cried Tom Grainger, who meant to say "Hear—hear!"

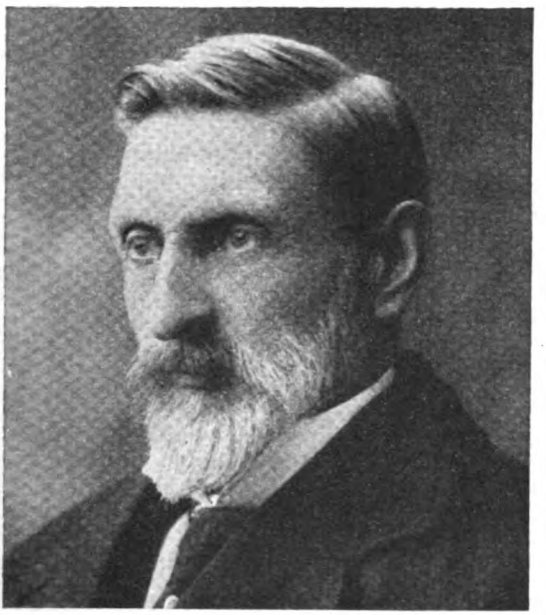
Mr. Painter wasn't listening to the others. He knew that this ought to be the last of him and that the rabbit was right.

Now that the excitement had passed, he was dead beat, spent and done for; but he kept a firm face, and when Mr. Noakes

Everybody, friend or foe, applauded Mr. Painter.

But the rabbit seemed to be saying, "I'd give it up now, when all's rosy; chuck it now, when everybody will remember you and say what a lad you were. Don't linger and make 'em sick and tired."

began again, "That's all right, sir," he answered. And when he'd packed his long green bag, put bat and pads and gloves away in it, "The club had better have these things," he said; "it's my last innings."



"DAYS of my LIFE"

By

H. RIDER HAGGARD

VIII.—"ERIC BRIGHTEYES," "BEATRICE," AND "NADA THE LILY."

The Empress Frederick accepts the dedication of "Eric Brighteyes"—A letter from Marie Corelli—The charge that "My pages have breathed war"—Andrew Lang, the critics, and "Nada the Lily."

I BEGAN to write "Eric Brighteyes," the saga which was the result of my visit to Iceland, on August 29th, 1888, as the MS. shows, and I finished it on Christmas Day, 1888. It was dedicated to the late Empress Frederick under the circumstances which are shown in the following correspondence.

My brother William wrote to me from the British Embassy at Athens, where I think he was First Secretary at the time, on October 30th, 1889:—

"It may interest you to hear that the Empress Frederick told me the other night that the last pleasure that her husband had on earth was reading your books, which he continued to do through his last days, and that he used to express the hope that he might live to make your acquaintance. I replied that I knew the pleasure that it would give you to know you had soothed the dying moments of such a man, whereupon she begged me to write and tell you. She was very much

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affected in speaking of this and of her husband, and I had subsequently a very interesting conversation with her about him and the rest of her family. . . . You will be glad to hear that the Prince of Wales and his family read 'Cleopatra' on their way out here and think it your best book."

On the 3rd of December, 1889, I wrote to the Empress as follows:—

"Madam,

"My brother has written to me from Athens saying that your Majesty is disposed to honour me by accepting the dedication of my romance, 'Eric Bright-eyes.'

"In a letter to him, which I believe your Majesty has seen, I have set out the reasons which caused me to make this offer. Therefore, I will not trouble your Majesty by repeating them any further than to say how deeply honoured I shall be should you finally decide to accept my dedication.

"I now enclose for your Majesty's consideration that which I have written to this end. Should I be so fortunate as to win approval for my draft dedication, would it be too much to ask that one of the enclosed copies may be returned to me signed by your Majesty's hand or that a *written* approval may be conveyed to mè in some other way? I ask this in order to protect myself from any possible future charge of having presumed to write what I have written without full permission."

NEXT comes a letter from the Empress to my brother William.

"Naples,
Grand Hotel,
Dec. 13th, 1889.

"The Empress Frederick has received a few days ago a letter from Mr. Haggard's brother on the subject of the dedication of his romance, 'Eric Brighteyes.'

"The Empress will have the greatest pleasure in accepting the dedication and begs Mr. Haggard to tell his brother so, and also to convey her grateful thanks to him in her name, for his letter and for the drafts of his dedication, to which the Empress would suggest a small alteration, which has been inserted in one copy.

"It is indeed true that the Emperor Frederick while at San Remo—during those months of anxiety, of alternate hopes and fears—which he bore with a fortitude, patience, and gentleness never to be forgotten, found great pleasure in reading Mr. Rider Haggard's books. He as well as the Empress especially admired 'Jess,' of which she read out a great part to him aloud. How pleasant were the hours so spent—and how bitter it is to look back on the last happiness of days never to return—can easily be imagined.

"Mr. Rider Haggard says in his letter that he leaves for Greece on the 13th: so, the Empress sends this on to Athens. The Empress hopes the slight change she suggests in one passage of the dedication which she thinks charming will not annoy the Author, and she is anxiously looking forward to reading the Book itself which will now have a special interest for her! The Empress regrets exceedingly that Mr. Haggard's brother was not at Athens during her stay there and that she thus lost the pleasure of making his acquaintance, but hopes she may be more fortunate another time."

On January 19th, 1890, the Empress sent me a registered holograph letter from Berlin, which is now bound up with the MS. of the book. It runs as follows:—

"The Empress Frederick thanks Mr. Rider Haggard for his letter of the 27th December and greatly regrets the long delay in answering.

"Mr. R. Haggard no doubt has heard of the sad circumstances which caused so hurried a departure from Rome. Since arriving here many unavoidable duties have completely taken up the Empress's time.

"Mr. R. Haggard will understand this all the better as he and his family have so recently sustained a sad loss of the same kind—for which the Empress takes this opportunity of offering her sincere condolences. The Empress encloses the printed draft of the dedication with a suggestion for a slight alteration; and begs Mr. R. Haggard to accept her best thanks for the copy of 'Jess' and the collection of stories, just published, which she is looking forward to reading when she has a little leisure."

With this letter are two copies of the dedication annotated in the hand of the Empress, for it seems that it was sent to her twice before it was finally settled as it appears in the book. A few years later, when I was at Homburg for my health, the Empress Frederick asked me to lunch, and I had a long and interesting conversation with her. As I kept no notes, however, I forget its details. She impressed me as a singularly charming and able lady.

"Eric" commended itself very much to Lang. Here is the first thing I can find about it in his letters.

> "'Eric' begins A.1. I don't know what about the Public, but I love a saga but even too well especially if it be a bloody one delicately narrated, or a very affectionate thing indeed but brutally set down, as Shakespeare says. I have only read Chapter I., but it's the jockey for me. *P.S.*—I have read four chapters, including Golden Falls. I think it is the best thing you have done, but of course I am saga-fain! I didn't think anyone could do it."

Next letter, dated Saturday:—

> "I have got Eric into Swanhild's toils, and I don't think I have come to a dull page yet. I don't want to flatter, but it literally surprises me that anyone should write such a story nowadays. Charles Kingsley would have spoiled it by maundering and philosophizing. I have hardly seen a line which is not in keeping yet. Also the plot is a good natural plot and the characters, except Gudruda, sympathetic. I think *she* might be a little less feminine and ill-willy. As literature I really think it is a masterpiece so far as I have gone. I'd almost as soon have expected more Homer as more saga. I don't think much of the boy who can lay it down till it is finished; women of course can't be expected to care for it."

"Eric" came out in due course and did well enough. Indeed, as a book it found, and still continues to find, a considerable body of readers. My recollection is, however, that it was reviewed simply as a rather spirited and sanguinary tale. Lang was quite right. The gentlemen who dispense praise and blame to us poor authors have not for the most part made a study of the sagas or investigated the lands where these were enacted. I wonder if it has ever occurred to the average reader how much the writer of a book which he looks at for an hour or two and throws aside must sometimes need to know, and what long months or years of preparation that knowledge has cost him. Probably not. My extended experience of the average reader is to the effect that he thinks the author produces these little things in his leisure moments, say, when he, the reader, would be smoking his cigarettes, and this without the slightest effort.

To return to "The World's Desire." This work also came out in due course and was violently attacked, so I gather from Lang's letters, for I have none of the reviews. All that I remember about them is the effort of its assailants to discriminate between that part of the work which was written by Lang and that part which was written by myself; an effort, I may add, that invariably failed. However, all these things have long gone by and the book remains, and is read, by some, with enthusiasm.

Now I will turn to my modern novel, "Beatrice." Oddly enough, Lang liked it, although he says somewhere that he "infinitely" prefers Umslopogaas and Skallagrim.

> "I have read your chapters of 'Beatrice.' *Sursum corda*: it moves, it has *go* and plenty of it. . . . I fear

I had a long and interesting conversation with the Empress Frederick.

it is a deal more popular line than 'The World's Desire.'"

May 8th :—

"I have read 'Beatrice,' and if she interests the public as much as she does me, she'll do. But I have marked it a good deal and would be glad to go through it with you, looking over the scribbled suggestions. It is too late, but what a good character some male Elizabeth would have been : nosing for dirt, scandal, spite and lies. He might easily have been worked in, I think. . . . They" (*i.e.* the hero and heroine) "are a good deal more in love than Odysseus, Laertes' son, and Mrs. Menelaus ! It is odd, usually you 'reflect' too much, and yet in this tale, I think a few extra reflections might have been in place. I feel a Thackerayan desire to moralize."

Miss Marie Corelli wrote on June 12th, 1890 :—

"If you are still in town and you would favour me with a call on Sunday afternoon next about five o'clock, I should be so pleased to renew the acquaintance made some months past, when your kindly words made me feel more happy and encouraged in my uphill clamber ! I saw you from the gallery at the Literary Fund Dinner, and wished I had had the chance of speaking to you. Your book 'Beatrice' is *beautiful*—full of poetry and deep thought—but I don't believe the public, that with obstinate pertinacity look to you for a continuation *ad infinitum* of 'King Solomon's Mines' and 'She'—will appreciate it as they ought and as it deserves. Whenever I see a *World* and *Pall Mall Gazette* vulgarly sneering at a work of literature, I conclude that it *must* be good—exceptionally so !—and this is generally a correct estimate—it certainly was so concerning 'Beatrice.'

"Trusting you will come and see me—(we are very quiet people and don't give crushes !)

"Believe me,

"Very sincerely yours,

"MARIE CORELLI."

I find a letter dealing with "Beatrice" from Cordy Jeaffreson, from which I quote an extract :—

". . . It is a fine, stirring, effective story ; but with all its power and dexterity it is not *the book* which will determine your eventual place in the annals of literature. You will write *that book* some ten years hence, when I shall be resting under the violets ; and when you are enjoying the fullness of your triumph, you will perhaps give me a kindly thought and say 'The old man was right.' In a line, it is no small thing to have thrown off 'Beatrice,' but you will do something much greater when 'you've come to forty year.' The story strengthens my confidence in you, though it falls short of all I hoped for you. This is *not* damning with faint praise.

"Ever yours,

"J. C. J."

Alas ! that wondrous work of fiction which Cordy Jeaffreson anticipated never was and never will be written by me. Be it good or be it bad, the best that I can do in the lines of romance and novel-writing is to be found among the first dozen or so of the books that I wrote, say between "King Solomon's Mines" and "Montezuma's Daughter." Also I would add this. A man's mind does not always remain the same. People are apt to say of any individual writer that he has gone off, whereas the truth may be merely that he has changed and that his abilities are showing themselves in another form. Now, as it happens in my own case, in the year 1891 I received a great shock ; also subsequently for a long period my health was bad. Although from necessity I went on with the writing of stories, and do so still, it has not been with the same zest. Active rather than imaginative life has appealed to me more, and resulted in the production of such works as "Rural England," "The Farmer's Year," and others. Moreover, I have never really cared for *novel* writing ; *romance* has always made a greater appeal to me.

THE charge has been brought against me that my pages have breathed war. I admit it, and on this point am quite unrepentant. Personally I may say that I have a perfect horror of war, and hope that I may not live to see another in which my country is involved, for it seems to me terrible that human beings should destroy each other, often enough from motives that do not bear examination. Yet there is such a thing as righteous war, and if my land were invaded I should think poorly of anyone, myself included, who did not fight like a wild-cat. Personally I am not sure that I would not poison the wells if I were unable to get rid of the enemy in any other way. What is the difference between killing a man with a drug and killing him with a bomb or by hunger and thirst ? Patriotism is the first duty, and the thing is to be rid of him somehow and save your country. However, this is a question on which I will not enter.

For the rest war brings forth many noble actions, and there can be no harm in teaching the young that their hands were given to them to defend their flag and their heads. If once a nation forgets to learn that lesson it will very soon be called upon to write Finis beneath its history. I fear that we, or some of us, are in that way now, or so I judge from the horror expressed upon every side at the doctrine that men should not grudge a year or so of their lives to be spent in learning the art of war. If God gave us our homes, I presume that He meant us to protect them.

I think that the next book I wrote after "Eric," or at any rate the next that was printed, was "Nada the Lily," which I began upon June 27th, 1889, and finished on January 15th, 1890. It is a pure Zulu story and, as I believe I have said, I consider it my best, or one of my best books.

I cannot find many letters about "Nada." Here, however, is one from Charles Longman dated May 14th, 1890.

"How are you named, who are so fair?"

A scene from Rider Haggard's famous Zulu romance, "Nada the Lily," which he considered one of his best books.

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> "'Nada' strikes me with wonder and awe. It is in some ways the greatest feat you have performed, I mean because you have constructed a story in which the *dramatis personæ* are all savages and yet you have kept the interest going throughout. There will, of course, be a terrible outcry about gore. I never read such a book. It is frightful, and the only justification for it is the fact that it is history, not imagination. Wherever it is possible I would tone down the effect rather than heighten it, so as to avoid the charge of wallowing or gloating as far as possible.
>
> "The wolves and the wolf-brethren are delightful; I wish you could have given us more of them. I was very glad to meet our old friend Umslopogaas as a boy."

Here, also, are some extracts from Lang's letters:—

> "I've finished 'Nada.' If all the reviewers in the world denied it, you can do the best sagas that have been done yet: except Njala perhaps. Poor Nada! I hope it will be done into Zulu. The old wolf Death-grip was a nice wolf."
>
> "St. Andrews, January 18th: I'll return 'Nada' to-morrow. The Wolves are the best thing of yours I know. Indeed, the unity of tone and savagery throughout are unique. But there will be rows about the endless massacres. I have no doubt a Zulu epic would be like this, but reviewers are not Zulus, worse luck. I think that it is excellent, and quite alone

in literature as a picture of a strange life. But one knows the public. It is far more veracious than 'Eric,' and far less modern: also far less rhetorical. Chaka is a masterpiece. But I am a voice *clamantis in eremo;* people won't understand. The *realien* are awfully well done, no appearance of cram about them."

Lang was quite right about the reviewers. They for the most part, not having mixed with savages and never having heard of Chaka and only dimly of the Zulus—for by this time our war with that people was forgotten—saw little in the book except unnecessary bloodshed. But there it is; a picture, as Lang says, "of a dying people." I hope that hundreds of years hence the highly-educated descendants of the Zulu race may read it and learn therefrom something of the spirit of their own savage ancestors.

IX.—SOME NOTABLE PEOPLE I HAVE MET.

Mr. Balfour—Sir Ian Hamilton—Sir Redvers Buller—Mr. Rudyard Kipling—Sir Henry Thompson—"Michael Fairless"—Dr. Wallis Budge.

I USED to know a good many interesting people during those years when I lived in London.

It was Andrew Lang who introduced me to Mr. Balfour. Of this circumstance I was reminded the other day when I met Sir Ian Hamilton, now Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in the Mediterranean stations, on the Orient liner *Otway*, when I was returning from Egypt (April, 1912). He asked me if I remembered a little dinner that Lang gave at the Oxford and Cambridge Club somewhere about 1886 or 1887, at which Balfour, he and I were the only guests. Then it all came back to me. Lang asked me to meet Mr. Balfour because he knew that already I wished to escape from novel writing and re-enter the public service, a matter in which he thought Mr. Balfour might be of assistance. Ian Hamilton, his cousin, he asked because he had escaped from Majuba, and I also knew a great deal about Majuba.

By the way, General Hamilton, whom I had not met from that day to this, gave me while we were on the ship together a long and full account of his experiences and sufferings in that dreadful rout, but I will not repeat them in all their painful detail. He was shot through the wrist and struck on the head with splinters of stone. The Boers dismissed him, telling him that he would "probably die." He passed a night in the cold, and had it not been for a kindly Boer who found him and bound up his wrist, I think he said with a piece of tin for a splint, he would probably have perished. That Boer, Sir Ian Hamilton—who, by the way, is now the only officer in the British Army who was present at Majuba—met at Bloemfontein the other day. Naturally they were the best of friends, and Sir Ian has sent him a souvenir of the event. Finally, as he lay, unable to move, he was found by a British search party and taken back to camp, where in due course he recovered.

Talking of the Boer War reminds me of Sir Redvers Buller. I knew him and his wife, Lady Audrey, very well. We used to dine at their house, where we met a number of distinguished people, among whom I remember Lord Coleridge, the Chief Justice. He was a brilliant conversationalist with a marvellous memory. I have heard him tell story after story without stopping, till at length I began to hope that the stock was running low. Sir Redvers was always very kind to me, but he was not a man to cross in argument. Once, at his own table, I heard him fall foul of the late Lord Justice Bowen in a way that made me glad that I was not Lord Justice Bowen. What struck me was the extraordinary patience with which the Judge submitted to the scolding. He must have had a very sweet nature, indeed I always thought that this was so.

IT was about this time that I first made the acquaintance of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, who had recently arrived in England, I suppose from India. He was then a young fellow about five-and-twenty, and in appearance and manner very much what he is to-day. I cannot recall under what circumstances we first met. Perhaps it was at a dinner-party which I gave at my house, 24, Redcliffe Square, to some literary friends. I remember that Kipling arrived late and explained the reason by pointing to a cut upon his temple. Whilst he was driving towards my house his hansom collided with a van in Piccadilly, and there was a smash in which he had a narrow escape. From that time forward we have always liked each other, perhaps because on many, though not on all, matters we find no point of difference.

On one occasion, very feeble and with

much-shattered nerves after an operation, I went to stay with my friend Lyne Stivens to recuperate, and thence for a day or two to Kipling's. Here, I remember, we compounded the plot of " The Ghost Kings " together, writing down our ideas in alternate sentences upon the same sheet of foolscap.

Among my pleasantest recollections during the last few years are those of my visits to the Kiplings and one that they paid me, during which we discussed everything in heaven above and earth beneath. It is, I think, good for a man of rather solitary habits now and again to have the opportunity of familiar converse with a brilliant and creative mind. Also we do not fidget each other. Thus only last year Kipling informed me that he could work as well when I was sitting in the room as though he were alone, whereas generally the presence of another person while he was writing would drive him almost mad. He added that he supposed the explanation to be that we were both of a trade, and I dare say he is right. I imagine, however, that sympathy has much to do with the matter.

A MAN very well known in his day with whom I was acquainted was the great and accomplished doctor, Sir Henry Thompson, by birth an East Anglian, like myself. Once I was present at one of his famous octave dinners. If I remember right we were received in a room hung round with beautiful pictures by Etty, as were others in the house. It had a couch in it on which Sir Henry slept, or rather tried to sleep, at nights. He suffered terribly from insomnia, and told me that one of his plans to induce slumber was to count thousands of imaginary sheep running through a phantom gate. Also he would rise and walk about the streets to cause weariness.

ANOTHER person whom I knew very well was a lady who has since become famous on the strength of her delicately-written and arresting booklet, " The Road-mender," which was published after her death. I allude to Miss Marjorie Barber, whose *nom-de-plume* was Michael Fairless (Fairless was one of her father's names).

My friendship with Marjorie was brought about by the fact that her sister Agnes—a woman with as fine a literary sense and more all-round ability, although circumstances and a family have allowed her but little time to make use of them—married my late brother, Mr. John Haggard, R.N., and before that event for some years lived in our house. While she was here, or shortly afterwards, Mrs. Barber, her mother, and Marjorie came to live at Bungay, a mile away, so that I saw plenty of the latter. She was a tall and pretty girl, very pleasant, very witty, and with all the eccentricity that so usually accompanies a touch of genius.

At the time of her residence in Bungay she was under the sway of a low-church mania, and used to appear dressed as a deaconess and with a large Bible pressed against her middle. Nor was she above laughing at herself when the ludicrous aspect of her get-up was pointed out to her. Subsequently, with a swing of the mental pendulum, she became equally high-church, and modelled crucifixes and saints extremely well. I think it was between these periods that she was with difficulty restrained from starting off alone to become a missionary in China. I remember well that when her sister Mabel, now also dead, was informed of one of these phases she wrote back : " Oh, for goodness' sake, leave Marjorie alone, for if it wasn't that, it would be ' Captain Happy Eliza ' with a tambourine ! "

In her later days, after her mother's death at Bungay, Marjorie met a lady doctor who, I think, treated her for some illness. To this lady and her husband she became so much attached that not only did she go to live with them, but also formally adopted their family name, and when she died left them everything she possessed. I believe that these adopted parents were very kind to her and nursed her well during her last painful and complicated illness, which I was told was tuberculous in its origin.

It was only during her last years that Marjorie took to writing, which, seeing how great were her abilities in this direction, is unfortunate. It is, however, quite possible, judging from what I know of her disposition, that if she had begun earlier she would have wearied of the business and cast it aside. As it was she showed great perseverance under distressing circumstances, for when she became unable to use her right hand, she taught herself to write with the left, and in all sorts of strange attitudes made necessary by her complaint. Personally I prefer " Brother Hilarius " to all her few other literary efforts, not excluding the much-praised " Road-mender," perhaps because of its charming pictures of the scenery of this neighbourhood.

ANOTHER of my early friends, who, I am glad to say, still survives, is Dr. Wallis Budge, the head of the Egyptian Department of the British Museum, to whom not long ago I dedicated my book, " Morning Star," an attention that pleased him very much. I really think that Budge is both the most industrious and the most learned man of my acquaintance. How he can compass all the work he gets through—and such work !—is to me one of the marvels of the age. As might be expected, he

is a great believer in the Old Egyptians; indeed, as I told him not long ago, he has been so long of their company in spirit that almost he has become one of them.

A certain mummy had many weird stories attached to it. It was purchased by "Midge" Ingram of *The Illustrated London News* and brought to London. Budge was sent to report upon it by his chief, Dr. Birch, and he said it belonged to the Ptolemaic Period and came from Akhmim in Upper Egypt. Ingram bought it in Luxor, and was said to have carried it off without paying what the native wanted for it. The native ran after the boat along the bank for miles and cursed Ingram with all his might in the name of Allah. Among the inscriptions on the coffin were extracts from a funerary work, and the copy of it in the British Museum had a curse attached. The curse declared that the man who stole the work, or burnt it, or buried it, or drowned it, should be blotted out, his body and seed destroyed for ever, etc. During a shooting tour in Somaliland Ingram shot at a huge she elephant with buck shot and enraged the beast. He fired again, and the elephant pursued him among the palms and finally caught him with her trunk and lifted him into the air and dashed him limb from limb. Then she found the trunk and trod it with her feet to a pulp. Sir Henry Meux, who was of the party, collected the remains, put them in a box and buried them, but a few days later the box was washed out of its bed, and the party decided to carry it to the sea-coast.

Before Ingram left England he had given the mummy—which he had agreed to sell to the British Museum—to Lady Meux, of Theobalds Park, who placed it in her Egyptian Collection. There it lay for several years, and Lady Meux used to go into the Museum every day, and pray by the side of the case containing it. Budge published a full description of the mummy and coffin, and a splendid collotype reproduction of the coffin, in the catalogue of the Meux Collection which he made for Lady Meux. The Collection was bequeathed to the British Museum by Lady Meux, but her conditions were such that the proposed gift could not be accepted. The Collection was then sold by auction and dispersed.

I asked Budge if he believed in the efficacy of curses. He hesitated to answer. At length he said that in the East men believed that curses took effect, and that he had always avoided driving a native to curse him. A curse launched into the air was bound to have an effect if coupled with the name of God, either on the person cursed or on the curser. Budge mentioned the case of Palmer, who cursed an Arab of Sinai, and the natives turned the curse on him by throwing him and his companions down a precipice, and they were dashed to pieces. Budge added: "I have cursed the fathers and female ancestors of many a man, but I have always feared to curse a man himself."

HERE are two other stories of Budge's which are worth preserving:—

When he was at Cambridge, Dr. Peile of Christ's offered him an Exhibition if he would be examined in Assyrian, and as Budge's funds were exiguous he was very anxious to get the Exhibition. An examiner, Professor Sayce of Oxford, was found to set the papers—in all, four—and the days for the examination were fixed. The night before one of the examinations Budge dreamed a dream in which he saw himself seated in a room that he had never seen before, a room rather like a shed with a skylight in it. The tutor came in with a long envelope in his hand, and took from it a batch of green papers, and gave one of these to Budge for him to work at that morning. The tutor locked him in and left him. When he looked at the paper he saw it contained questions and extracts from bilingual Assyrian and Akkadian texts for translation. The questions he could answer, but he could not translate the texts, though he knew them by sight, and his emotions were so great that he woke up in a fright. At length he fell asleep, but the dream repeated itself twice, and he woke up in a greater fright than before. He then got up, it was about two a.m., went downstairs to his room, lighted a fire, and, finding the texts in the second volume of Rawlinson's great work, found the four texts and worked at them till breakfast time, when he was able to make passable renderings of them.

He went to college at nine, and was informed that there was no room in the Hall, it being filled by a classical examination, and that he must go into a side room near the kitchens. His tutor led him to the room, which was the duplicate, skylight and all, of the one he had seen in his dream. The tutor took from his breast-pocket a long envelope and from it drew out several sheets of green paper, similar to that of the dream, and gave Budge the examination paper for that morning, saying that it was green because Sayce, on account of delicate eyesight, was obliged to use green paper when writing cuneiform. The tutor then turned, said he would come back at twelve, and going out locked the door behind him, as Budge saw him do in the dream. When he sat down at the table and looked at the paper he saw written on it the questions and four pieces of text for

translation, and the texts were line for line those which he had seen in his dream. Surprise at his good fortune prevented him from writing steadily, but at length he got to work and had finished the paper before the tutor appeared and unlocked the door at noon. The three other papers were easier, and Budge got the Exhibition—for him a very vital matter.

I asked Budge if he could explain the matter, or account for it in any way, and he said: "No. My mother and maternal grandmother both had dreams of this sort from time to time when they were in any kind of difficulty, and in their dreams they were either shown what to do or were in some way helped. Being very pious folk they regarded these dreams as the work of Divine Providence, who wished for some reason to help them out of trouble or difficulty. For myself I could never imagine Providence troubling about any examination, but I was quite overcome for a time with astonishment at my good luck."

The native ran after the boat along the bank for miles and cursed with all his might.

There is one story. Let the reader make of it what he can, for it is beyond my powers of interpretation.

IN the second story Budge was only indirectly concerned. He was at Cairo waiting for a boat to England, and he was wandering down Kamil Street, when two ladies, mother and daughter, stopped him, and greeted him with warmth and affection. They had been telegraphing to several places in the Sudan to find him, and were glad to meet him. Budge had known both mother and daughter for several years and asked them if they wanted to go to the Egyptian Museum. The daughter said "Yes." The mother said "No," and then went on to tell him that she wanted to have her fortune told by a really good Egyptian fortune-teller. There was such a man in

Cairo at the time, and Budge had talked astral lore and Zodiacal influences and such stuff with him, and went and found him and introduced him to the lady. A retired quarter of a balcony was found, and the three of them—Budge and the two women—sat on chairs, while the native—a Parsee, by the way—squatted on the ground. Budge told him that his gratuity would depend on the excellence of the fortune he brought to the lady. He took out of his bosom a small brass astrolabe (which Budge has to this day), and a turquoise tablet with figures of the planets, etc., on it, when Budge said: "Put those away and read the lady's fortune from her face." He put them away, and sat and looked steadily into the lady's face. Presently he said: "Madam is — years — months and — days old," and his statement was correct. Next he said: "Madam has been ill since her husband died." Budge did not know of the death, but the man was correct. After a pause he said: "Madam drinks too much strong water." Budge was furious, but the lady said: "It is true; I tried to drown my sorrow." Another pause, and then: "Madam is thinking of making a contract about a house. I see the house in a very large garden. Let not Madam take that house, for if she does she will lose money, will become ill in it, very ill." Budge asked the lady if

this was true, and she said: "Yes, I have the lawyer's letter in my pocket," and produced it.

At this point Budge insisted on withdrawing out of earshot of the conversation between the fortune-teller and the lady, and sat where he could watch the proceedings. After a full half-hour the lady jumped up from her chair, turned the contents of her money-bag into the man's lap, and then rushed in almost speechless fury to where Budge was, and upbraided him and called him a false friend. She said words to this effect: "You have told that man everything about my life, and you are in

The fortune-teller squatted on the ground and looked steadily into the lady's face.

league with him. You are both blackguards, and I will never speak to you or see you again. That scoundrel has insulted me, and he dared to tell me to watch my daughter because she would poison me and kill me. That shows what you are." The lady rushed off to her rooms and Budge never saw her again.

The end of the story as Budge gave it to me is this: The lady took the house, which was large and in a fashionable West-end quarter, spent a large sum of money on the lease and in furniture, and then fell seriously ill. The illness increased, the doctors ordered her to the seaside, and the house was sold at a great loss, and also much of the furniture. Her illness increased, and one night when in acute pain she asked her daughter to give her a dose of medicine containing morphia because she could not rest. The daughter took up the small bottle which her mother pointed out to her, and seeing no instructions written upon the label, poured the whole of its contents into a glass and gave it to her. The sick lady, dazed with pain, took the glass and drank all that was in it. She never spoke or moved again. Reports of the proceedings which took place appeared in many papers, and the absence of instructions on the label of the bottle was somehow explained.

There is the story, and I leave the reader to ponder over it.

(To be continued.)

THE ONE-POUND NOTE

By

STACY AUMONIER

Illustrated by
S. ABBEY

I.

ONE day the Devil was walking through Regent's Park when he saw a tramp asleep on a bench, with his arm curled around his head, and the palm of his hand half open.

"Here's a joke!" said the Devil. And he slipped a one-pound treasury note into the tramp's hand, and went off with a chuckle.

This, you may argue, was a very undiabolical act. The Devil doesn't do that sort of thing. But the actions of the Devil are difficult to dogmatize about. He sometimes performs actions, not only through the medium of protean characters, but even through the impulses of simple hearts.

No one, for instance, would ever think of likening dear old Sir Jeremy Boodsnarp unto the Devil. He was the chairman of several hospitals, and an indefatigable worker in numerous philanthropic societies, a member of the R.S.P.C.A., The Prisoners' Aid Society, and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. His personality exuded kindliness, charity, and brotherly

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love. He was returning one afternoon from the Zoo (he was, of course, a F.Z.S.) and walking through Regent's Park on the way to his house in Portland Place, when he heard the park-keepers calling: "All out! All out!" It was evidently just on closing time, so he hurried his footsteps. About half-way through the flower park he saw a most deplorable fragment of humanity curled up on a bench. Toes were sticking out of his boots, and his tattered clothes revealed splashes of white flesh. His blue-red face was almost concealed by stubbly black hair, and he was breathing heavily. Poverty and distress always stirred Sir Jeremy profoundly. It was fortunate that he was a wealthy man—the business he controlled had in his father's time been devoted to accordion pleating, but now paid colossal dividends from the manufacture of artificial silk stockings—for it was said that he was never known to refuse any appeal of a charitable nature.

Regarding this pitiable figure through his thick glasses he thought to himself: "Poor fellow! Poor fellow!"

He looked up and down the path. There was no one in sight. Removing a pound treasury note from his case he slipped it furtively into the tramp's hand, and hurried away. Dear, kindly old Sir Jeremy!

Three minutes later Samuel Basingstoke came along. He was one of the younger keepers, a man who had not yet lost his ambitions. The sight of the sleeping tramp excited his official ardour. He prodded him with his stick and said: "Come on. Out you go!"

But the tramp continued to snore. It was then that Samuel observed the note gripped in his hand. And he thought to himself: —

"Hullo, my lad, I wonder where you got that from!"

He shook him more violently, but still without result. "Now this is a curious position," thought Samuel; "he's pinched that quid from somewhere, and he's sleeping off a binge. He's probably taken a lot more. He's some kind of thief or burglar." His mind then rapidly adjudged a nice point in personal advancement. If he delivered the tramp over to the police with his treasury note complete, kudos would undoubtedly accrue to him. On the other hand he would most certainly not get the pound. And a pound was a pound these days.

After less than a minute's reflection he decided to "take the cash, and let the credit go." Out loud, as though in self-defence, he said:—

"Might as well pouch this in the meantime, anyway."

And he took the pound note and stuffed it into his pocket. After making one or two more attempts to awaken the tramp, he went off and informed the authorities. The tramp was removed on a stretcher to the Union Workhouse, where he died three days later from double pneumonia, never having heard of Sir Jeremy or his kind, philanthropic act towards himself.

II.

WHEN Samuel Basingstoke arrived home at his lodgings off Albany Street that evening he was feeling in very good humour, but somewhat in a quandary. He would like to have taken his wife out, and spent in any case a goodly portion of the pound in some kind of festivity. But his wife being a very respectable and religious woman he couldn't very well explain how he came by it. Moreover, he found on his arrival that any chances of explaining anything must for the moment be postponed. His wife was in tears, and his son was there. Now this son was the sorrow of their life. He was a weak and dissolute youth in the early twenties, who, entirely against their wishes, had recently married a girl from a jam factory. Only earning thirty-five shillings a week as a junior clerk at an organ builders, he still continued to back horses, visit public-houses, and get into debt, and he was always calling on his mother to borrow money. Matters had that evening apparently reached a crisis. When Samuel arrived at the landing outside their living room, he overheard his wife and son having a fierce altercation on the same old theme. The boy was pleading, and the mother was tearfully protesting that she couldn't, she simply couldn't lend him any more. It wasn't fair to his father, and, moreover, she hadn't got it.

Samuel took off his coat, and hung it up on a peg, and then went in. He was angry. His anticipations of a pleasant evening were blasted. He meant to stand no further nonsense from this boy. He strode in and exclaimed:—

"What's all this?"

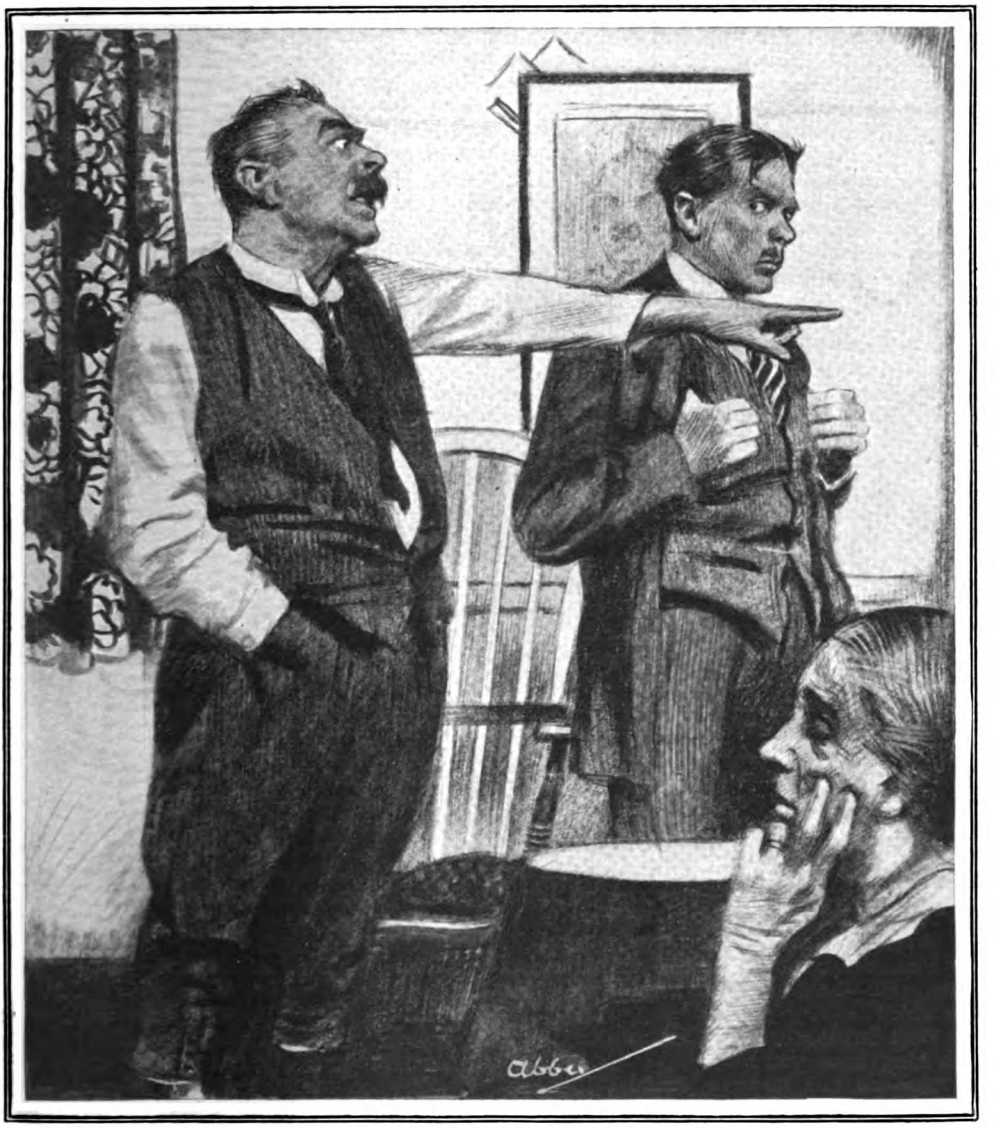
The wife whimpered: "It's money, Sam. He wants more money."

The boy sulking by the fireplace said:—

"I must have a quid to last me to the end of the week. It's not for me. It's Flo. Why, blimey! she hasn't got nothing to eat."

This oblique attack on Sam's unexpected and strangely-come-by "quid" angered him the more. He was blowed if, directly he had a bit of luck, the boy should deprive him of it. He exclaimed fiercely:—

"You get out! You've had about ten shillings a week out of your mother ever since you were married. We told you not



"You get out! You've had about ten shillings a week out of your mother ever since you were married. Clear out!"

to. Now you've made your bed you can blanketty well lie on it."

"It's only this once," said the boy. "After this week I'll be all right."

"Yes, that's what you always say. Clear out!"

It was the voice that had terrified many small boys off the lawns and flower-beds of the park, and his son was not man enough to oppose it. With an inaudible imprecation he picked up his cap and slunk out. They did not hear him go. This little trouble having been temporarily adjusted, the strong man said, in a changed voice :—

"What about a cup of tea, Mother?"

He quite rightly thought that a change of occupation would be good for her. Also he wanted his tea, and time to reconsider the whole situation. The kettle was simmering on the hob, and she went to the cupboard, and silently got out plates and cups and saucers. Samuel sat down and lighted his pipe.

When the tea was made they drank it without talking. The painful subject of

Len had been discussed enough. This last episode seemed to demand no further comment. But what about the quid? How was he to explain it? Maggie was a good and careful housewife, and their money affairs were always carefully regulated. She had a wonderful memory for details, and he had told her that morning that he had only three shillings to last him until Saturday, and this was Thursday. Even taking her to the pictures hardly seemed justified. Racking his brains for all they were worth, he could think of no excuse. At last he decided that the only alternative was to be completely selfish in the matter. Later on he would make some excuse and go down to the Green Man and have a few beers. Charley Sopwith would be there, and some of his pals, and he could perhaps get a game of billiards and—well, stay till closing time.

HE didn't quite like doing this, because whatever faults Samuel Basingstoke may have had, he was always straight with his wife. He was sometimes surly and bad-tempered, and not very intelligent, but he was rather proud of his character for rectitude and honesty. And he had done something which, regarded in this calm light, was deliberately dishonest. He tried to persuade himself that it wasn't, but he knew that in the eyes of the law he had stolen. He moved uncomfortably in his chair, and his wife took up some sewing.

About eight o'clock he suddenly said :—

" Oh, I've just remembered. Bert Smalley wanted me to look in and see him for half an hour this evening. He—he wants to show me some photographs."

" Photographs ! "

" Yes, some photographs of his son's baby. He—he's just sent them from New Zealand."

" Bert Smalley's son ! But you've never seen him, have you ? "

" No—no, but, anyway, I said I'd look in just—er—just for——"

" Oh, all right, Samuel. Don't be long. I feel a little upset this evening."

Rather shamefacedly he shuffled out on to the landing. He put on his coat, and some instinct made him intuitively dive into his pocket, just to have a feel of the quid. It was not in one pocket, and he dived his hand into the other. And then the horrible truth flashed through him. *It was not there!* The boy had stolen it! And then he did the foolish thing. He lost his head, and without thinking rushed back into the room and exclaimed :—

" My God ! Maggie, that young devil has pinched a quid out of my coat pocket ! "

His wife turned pale.

" Pinched a quid ! "

" It was there in my coat when I came in."

Mrs. Basingstoke swayed, almost as though about to faint. Neither of them spoke. It was an action they could very well believe, but which seemed to call for no kind of explanation or comment. Len was like that. He would get into terrible trouble one day. Samuel sat down nursing his sense of outrage, and incidentally his feeling of keen disappointment. There was no call now to go and see Bert Smalley's photographs of his son's baby. He was awakened from his gloomy reflections by the still, small voice of his wife, saying :—

" You told me this morning, Sam, that you only had three shillings. Where did you get the quid from that you had in your pocket ? "

Damn ! Samuel was not of an inventive turn of mind. In his agitation he had overlooked how this confession would involve him. He made as decent a pause as he dare, then he spluttered :—

" Oh ; it was—it was a bet."

" A bet ! "

" Yes. I had a bet with George Crosby that—that it wouldn't rain to-day."

It was quite apparent that Mrs. Basingstoke couldn't believe her senses. One of Samuel's boasts was that he never bet. He never even put a shilling on a horse. And then suddenly to gamble a whole pound on something so uncertain and problematical as the weather in London ! She wanted to protest against this outrage upon her commonsense, but she only replied weakly :—

" Suppose you had lost ? Had you a pound to pay with ? "

Samuel felt that he was being made to look ridiculous. A situation would soon arise which he would be incapable of dealing with. He answered somewhat brusquely : " I suppose I could have got hold of it."

And he went out, not to visit either Bert Smalley or the Green Man, but to walk the streets and curse his fate.

And Mrs. Basingstoke was thinking :—

" Is it possible ? My husband—as well as my son ? "

III.

WHEN Leonard Basingstoke told his mother that he had no money at all, and his wife was without food, he was, as usual, lying. All the time he was pleading he had seven shillings in his pocket, and his wife was not the kind of person to go without food. She had two married sisters, one of whom was married to a fairly successful greengrocer, and who would always see that poor Flo in any case had enough. The other's husband was in the tallow trade, and had often helped her out of her difficulties as well.

Len's burning anxiety for a quid on this occasion was the result of inside information about the winner of the Cambridgeshire on the morrow. The gentleman who told him that Smylax was going to win said it was just like picking up money in the street. It sounded as though the action of backing Smylax would be almost cruel to the bookmaker, like fleecing an innocent lamb. He would be well advised to put, not only his shirt, but his hat, coat, trousers, and every penny he could beg, borrow, or steal on this dark mare.

His borrowing area was strictly limited. He had already " touched " his wife's two brothers-in-law for various small amounts, and he was becoming unpopular in that quarter. He owed one of the men at the works twelve shillings and another seven, and another five. The road was blocked in this direction. But his mother was always fair game. He had only to appeal to the sentimental side of her nature, and talk about his wife being hungry, to extract a few shillings from her. On this occasion he meant to bring off a scoop. Nothing less than a pound would suffice. When Smylax won he decided that it would be expedient to pay her back with interest, in fact to play the big man. He would be generous and fair, and probably give her some little present.

Her rebuff then had jarred him unpleasantly. It threatened not merely to rob him of great spoils, but to slur his magnificent gesture. He became sarcastic and cruel, and rather enjoyed the sensation of making her weep. And then, of course, the father came in.

He was afraid of his father, with his thick chest and park-keeper's voice. He had on occasions felt the weight of his hands, and he knew at once that the game was up. Out on the landing he was inwardly cursing the uncharitableness of parents when his eye alighted on his father's familiar coat. With the desperate gesture of a man who has reached his last resources and will try unlikely experiments, he dived his hand into the two breast pockets. The astounding contact of a crisp one-pound treasury note made him gasp. He had got it! He shot down the stairs and out of the house like a flash. Instead of going home he went straight to a public-house he knew of off Tottenham Court Road, and handed the pound with a betting slip to a gentleman he knew who handled these matters. He was afraid to trust himself to keep it, even for half an hour, in case he broke into it. Having parted with it he had several beers and went home.

He was no longer afraid of his father. If he turned up he would swear he knew nothing about the pound note. They could prove nothing. His father could search him if he liked, and the rooms, and even tackle Flo. He was perfectly safe. His wife was at home, dolled up as usual, with powdered cheeks and carmine lips. She was ironing a blouse.

" I'm fair fed up," was her only greeting.

He suggested a visit to the pictures, to which she readily agreed.

The entertainment would serve the double purpose of distracting his thoughts and claiming his body—in case his father *did* turn up. Not that he was afraid, of course.

THEY stayed some time at the pictures, until the smoky atmosphere produced in Len an uncontrollable thirst. So they both nipped out, half an hour before closing time, and Len drank beer and Flo drank stout until it was time to go home. And over his third glass he told her he had put a pound on Smylax.

There was a scene. The trouble arose not because he had been betting, but because he was backing the wrong horse. Flo called him every kind of nincompoop. She knew, as a matter of fact—her brother-in-law in tallow had had it straight out of the horse's nosebag—that Loiterer was a dead certainty for the Cambridgeshire. The accumulation of his betting failures seemed to reach a climax in her bitter contempt for his selection, and her venom spread in other directions. She would like to know, for instance, how he had got hold of a quid to put on a horse, when only yesterday he hadn't enough to buy her half-a-dozen cheap handkerchiefs. He was a failure, and a rotter, and he could go to blazes. They spent a bad night and he awoke the next morning not only feeling jagged and ill-tempered, but seriously lacking in confidence in Smylax.

However, it was too late to retrench. The die had been cast. He shuffled sulkily along to work. By midday he was perfectly certain that Smylax hadn't an earthly chance. Life seemed a dark and desperate business. He had boasted to some of the men about his bet, and they had simply laughed him to scorn. Smylax was one of the worst outsiders, priced at sixty-six to one.

Several of the men had shillings each way on various horses, and at three o'clock one of the sportsmen slipped out and got a paper. When he returned, Len had almost lost interest in the race. He stared at the man who was reading the results. The latter scratched his head, and said :—

" Gawd! let's see. Who was it who backed Smylax ? "

It took Len some moments to focus the

His wife was at home. She was ironing a blouse.

tremendous news. He required the corroboration of all the evening papers. When he realized it he felt his heart beating rapidly with a kind of sickening excitement. Without doing any work he had made sixty-six pounds!

He knew he would do no more work that day, and he would probably get the sack, but he didn't care. Sixty-six pounds! You could live for months on the fat of the land on a sum like that. What did it matter afterwards! Besides, he had done it once, and he could do it again. Vast fortunes loomed before his mind's eye. The story of his success spread through the works. The other men came up and chaffed him. He had only one momentary concern. The bookmaker didn't settle up till the end of the week, and he had no money. He must do something to celebrate this triumph, now, to-night. He must buy drinks and get drinks himself, and that little cat, Flo, shouldn't come into it. He wouldn't forgive her for last night in a hurry. Loiterer, indeed! He laughed to himself ecstatically. Then he approached Waynes, a foreman fitter, who was reputed to be something of a financier. He put his case to him. After a good deal of argument and persuasion, Waynes agreed to pay him three pounds ten shillings on his written bond to return him five pounds by the following Monday.

He left the works, accompanied by three of the men, with the treasury notes stuffed loosely in his trousers pockets.

And as they all drank double whiskies at his expense, they cheerfully toasted his health.

And Len set forth on a wild carouse through the West-end. He dropped friends and picked up others. He paid for everyone. He ate nothing, but drank double whiskies and sodas, and eventually neat spirit. At

"I'm fair fed up," was her only greeting.

a quarter to twelve that night a policeman found him in Essex Street, Strand, in a state of raging delirium tremens. He died the next afternoon in a hospital from alcoholic poisoning.

IV.

FLO heard the news of his death within half an hour of the news of his winning the bet. It may be said that the two items of information balanced each other admirably. Her infatuation for Len had exhausted itself within the first two months of their married life. He was beginning to bore and disgust her. At the same time there was something upsetting and terrifying about death. It seemed horrible to think of someone with whom she had been so intimate lying dead—cold for ever and ever. She wept a little, and became quite hysterical when her sisters came to sympathize with her. But the sturdy law of self-preservation quickly asserted itself. Through her tears she began to see that life was anxious to present her with new changes. She was very young and good red blood coursed freely through her veins. Then came the news about the bet. She dried her eyes. Len could not yet have had the money, consequently it would be hers. Sixty-six pounds! From being the drudge of a penniless clerk she suddenly regarded herself as an interesting widow of

some affluence, in any case, for a time. She need not work, and with the aid of this ready money she would surround herself with the glamour of wealth, scent, new silk stockings, and a well-fitting coat and skirt. It might lead to her marrying again, a man who was much better off. She was learning.

She set to work to find out the details of Len's operations. She learnt about the three pounds ten shillings and the name of the bookmaker, and the day when he paid up. The news of her winnings, encouraged in the beginning, quickly spread, and became exaggerated. From sixty-six pounds the sum was said to be one hundred and sixty pounds, then five hundred and sixty pounds. A few days later the story got round that an uncle in Australia had died and left the widow of Len Basingstoke a fortune, bringing in an income of over three hundred pounds a year.

Flo almost believed it herself. Whatever happened, she never meant to be poor again. She wanted money, money, and more money. She saw herself dressed in Paris frocks, riding in motor-cars, and dining at expensive restaurants. She deserved it, she told herself. Fate had been unkind to her, and she meant to get her own back. On Thursday, the day of Len's funeral, two men were already making love to her. The one, an impecunious shop assistant, she snubbed, the other she did nothing to discourage.

This was Mr. Geoffrey Wildbank. He was a middle-aged man, and reputed to be well off. He owned an oil and colour business in High Street, Camden Town. She did not know that Mr. Wildbank was on the very verge of bankruptcy. That she was just what he was looking for, an attractive young woman with a small private income, so that the evening of his life should be spent without cares or responsibilities. He was well-dressed, cultivated in speech, and ingratiating in manner. Without emotion, she made a mental note of him, and considered him from many angles. She was not going to be rushed again. He called on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. He was decorous but sympathetic. He brought her flowers, and gave out hints about dinners and theatres when the first flush of grief had abated.

And Flo thought: "Yes, but I wonder how much money you have got?"

And he was thinking: "I wonder how this money of hers is tied up."

She had borrowed twenty pounds from her sisters on the strength of the sixty pounds she was to get to-morrow. Her black frock was set off by a large bunch of Mr. Wildbank's Parma violets. The atmosphere of the room was pungent with the aroma of "La Mysterieuse."

And then, partly to test him, she told him the truth. On the morrow she was to draw thirty-five pounds as the result of her late husband's backing the winner of the Cambridgeshire. Apart from that she hadn't a penny in the world. She waxed quite enthusiastic about her husband, and said what a good sportsman he was and what a lot he knew about horses and life in general. And while she was talking, she observed her visitor quite obviously crumple up. He cooled and grinned unpleasantly.

"What an ugly old man you will make," she thought. "I wouldn't have you at all. Anyway, except at a big price, and the whole thing drawn up by lawyers."

When he went he said nothing further about a proposed lunch on the morrow. In fact, he made no reference to seeing her again at all. When he had gone she thought: "Men are like that, I suppose. Well, I guess I can look after myself."

On the morrow she would collect what money was due to her, then we should see.

V.

FOR many years now, Mr. Paul Rosenbloom, the bookmaker, had suffered from kidney disease, which produced in him uncontrollable fits of melancholy. On that dismal Sunday evening, as he stumbled up the stairs to his flat in the Portobello Road, he felt that every disaffection and disaster that had ever occurred to humanity had cumulated in himself. He was over sixty, feeling horribly ill, and he knew that he was irretrievably bankrupt. It was the Cesarewitch and the Cambridgeshire which had done it. With a very good week he might have just pulled through. But the favourite had won the Cesarewitch, and, for some reason or other, in the neighbourhood where he operated a number of people had got hold of Smylax. On the morrow he was due to pay out over seven hundred pounds, and his assets were negligible. He was down and out, utterly ruined—for the last time. He stood in the middle of his small sitting-room, fumbling in his pockets. Suddenly his hand gripped a one-pound treasury note attached to a slip in his waistcoat pocket. Quite indolently he looked at the two pieces of paper. "Smylax!" Another one! He had overlooked it ever since leaving the Pig In Clover.

Another sixty-six pounds! This note seemed to bring the melancholy truth to a dynamic crisis. He could stand no more. Slowly he felt his way to the drawer of a small side-table and groped for an instrument—an instrument he had been keeping all these years for just such a moment as this.

VI.

FLO was instinctively a late riser, but on this morning she bestirred herself. She determined that she would be the first in the field. Mr. Rosenbloom might be a little obstinate. The foreman fitter had warned her that, technically, she could not claim the money from Mr. Rosenbloom. The matter would have to pass through the usual processes of the law, although, of course, she would get it in the end. But if she called on him he might be willing—it depended very largely on the state of his kidneys—to pay her direct and thus avoid all the delay.

She arrived at Gulliver Mansions, Portobello Road, at a quarter to nine, and walked up the three flights of stairs to No. 304. She rang the bell, but received no answer. After ringing twice she noticed that the door was not quite shut. She gave it a push and called out :—

" Mr. Rosenbloom ! "

She hesitated for some moments, feeling nervous of entering the unknown. Then, leaving the door wide open, she stepped into the hall, and called out the name again. The thought of her money and her perfectly justifiable reason for calling gave her courage. She looked into the bedroom, and then into the sitting-room. On the threshold of the latter she stopped, her hand glued to the handle.

Just under the window was the body of a man, fully dressed, huddled in a curious position, a revolver clutched in his right hand. Her quick gamin-like mind grasped the whole truth of the situation at a glance. She thought :—

" He's lost all his money and shot himself."

For a second the contemplation of her own loss was obliterated. When she realized it, the hard school in which she had been brought up trained her to readjust her forces instantly. It was one more of those blows ! These men again ! She was about to close the door when her eye alighted on two pieces of paper which the suicide had apparently dropped just before the deed. She looked round to see that no one was about, then advanced and picked them up. One was a new crisp one-pound treasury note, the other was a betting slip. Len's !

In that grim instant she enjoyed a certain stab of complacency that the money which should have been hers had been the cause of the wretch's death. There was a dramatic, bizarre element about it which appealed to her film-soaked nature. She picked up the pound note and, putting it in her bag, said out loud :—

" That's mine, anyway."

Then she went downstairs, and told the caretaker of the flats quite calmly what she had seen.

VII.

MR. WILLIAM TOMPKINSON, who called himself " Lisette," sold ladies' millinery in a little shop off the Charing Cross Road. He prided himself on his French models and his considerable clientele in the lower strata of the theatrical world. His lady assistant had gone, and, it being past six o'clock, he was just about to close the shop and depart himself, when a young woman entered. She was very young, rather pretty, with rouged cheeks and carmined lips. A bit common, he thought to himself, but by no means unattractive, and wearing quite a well-cut coat and skirt. He graciously consented to sell her a hat. She tried on several models, and was difficult to please. At last she took a fancy to a canary-coloured toque trimmed with black. It certainly suited her to perfection, emphasizing the perky tilt of her head. The price was twenty-seven shillings and sixpence.

" Oh, do let me have it for a pound," she said. " I've only got a pound, and I want it ever so much."

Mr. Tompkinson shook his head. But the lady was obdurate and persistent, and because she was—yes, she was rather attractive, and he wanted to get home to Clapham, he gave way. She thanked him profusely and kept it on, asking him to post her other hat to an address she gave him.

He observed her regarding herself from every angle in his cunning arrangement of mirrors. She was undoubtedly delighted. She smiled at herself with pleasure and sheer admiration. The hat seemed to give her confidence and poise. He saw her step nimbly along the narrow passage from his shop into Charing Cross Road, and then walk straight across in the direction of Leicester Square. And as she walked she glanced obliquely this way and that.

" H'm," thought Mr. Tompkinson. " She's very young." Then he sighed and murmured : " Pity ! Pity ! "

He had put the cash taken that day away into the safe, and being in a hurry, he stuffed the pound note she had given him into his trousers pocket, locked up the shop, and walked rapidly to his bus. It was, as usual, crowded, and he had to ride outside. The night was dark and very windy. The bus was just crossing the bridge when the conductor came for his fare. He had to stand up to get at his trousers pocket. As he pulled out his change, the note, which he had forgotten, fluttered out, was caught by a gust of wind and blew straight up into

"Oh, do let me have it for a pound," she said. "I've only got a pound, and I want it ever so much."

the air across the river. It zigzagged violently at eccentric angles, and eventually settled on the ripples a quarter of a mile away. There it floated until it joined a kind of small flotilla of river flotsam, straw, and corks, and other refuse. It was still floating when the morning came, and many a lighterman and bargee cast a casual eye upon it. But a lot of paper floats down the river. Later in the day it got soggy and disappeared from sight. Probably it returned to some kind of condition from which it originally emanated, for scientists tell us that matter is indestructible.

VIII.

SIR JEREMY BOODSNARP was comfortably snoozing in the easy-chair in front of the fire in his well-stocked library. He was feeling rather more than ever charitable and well-disposed. It had really been an excellent dinner, and did every credit to Malplaquet, his new chef. He had had three glasses of that most excellent port, Robert, his brother, had sent him down from Yorkshire. What an inexplicably beautiful and wonderful place the world was. Such a benign and beautiful world if only everyone would have benign and charitable thoughts. He thought with lingering pride of his speech that afternoon at the Girl Guides' Friendly Society. How pleasant and charming the countess had been to him. Kindliness and Charity——

The recollection of his good deeds clustered lovingly in the vague blue atmosphere above the light of his excellent cigar. Big deeds, little deeds, they all counted. His mind wandered at random.

That poor tramp he had seen asleep on the bench in the park. Poor fellow! Poor fellow! Doubtless he would have been awakened, and joy will fill his heart. Cold and empty days, dark and cheerless nights, and then suddenly—— Poor fellow! Poor fellow! Perhaps at that very moment over hot cocoa and—and—what was it these people ate? Perhaps at that very moment he was blessing the name of his benefactor. Ah! but he did *not* know. That was nine-tenths of the beauty of charity, *real* charity.

Poor fellow! Poor fellow! What was that?

It sounded like a cat, something like a vague discordant echo of a cat. It couldn't be, of course, not in that beautifully-cared-for library of carved walnut. Smithers would have seen to that.

Dear old Sir Jeremy! With the autumn wind whistling gently around the shutters, and the simplicity of his heart more lyrical than any music, how should you expect him to recognize the low chuckling of the Devil over there beyond the farthest radiator?

MR. PHILPOTTS FINDS HIMSELF

By

BEATRICE REDPATH

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

EVELYN, as usual, was sitting at the piano, making little runs and trills, her fingers fluttering like white butterflies over the keys. Adele had thrown herself negligently down on the broad couch, her long neck drooping gracefully, as she rested her small pointed chin in one hand. Charlotte was sitting at the writing desk, making out a list of guests who were to be invited.

" And you think that Friday will be quite the best day to invite them ? "

A little rush of light notes, and then Evelyn's slightly drawling tones :—

" Yes, of course it is. A holiday is always so dreadful unless there is something very special to do."

" I don't see any sense in holidays at all," remarked Adele, languidly.

Mr. Philpotts stirred uneasily in his chair beside the window. He was a small man with a round face and a naive expression. His hair was thin and he made an effort to brush it so that it gave no appearance of baldness.

He fluttered the pages of his book, gave a nervous cough, and laid the volume on his knee, abandoning any pretence of reading. The movement seemed to recall the fact of his existence to Charlotte. She swept him with a cool indifferent glance.

" I suppose you won't be taking a holiday on Friday, Norman ? "

" Well, I was thinking of it," he faltered. " I rather thought I'd paint the window-frames. I've been wanting to do it for some time and Friday seemed to be a good day."

" Oh, well, of course you couldn't possibly do that when the girls are having a party. We couldn't have the smell of paint in the house. I shouldn't think it was very necessary for you to take a holiday with Saturday and Sunday coming directly afterwards."

" The office will be closed," he said, fingering the leaves of the book on his knee, " but, of course, I could do something else."

" Yes, of course," put in Adele ; " why don't you take a day in the country ? That would be nice for you."

Her tone sounded as though she were giving him a large and beautiful present.

There was a pause. Mr. Philpotts felt as though Adele were waiting for him to thank her for her generosity. Charlotte tapped her list with the point of her pencil. It was quite apparent that the question of how he should be disposed of for the day should be decided instantly.

" I believe that there's to be a Regatta at Port Burleigh on Friday," Evelyn said from the piano; " that would be just the thing for Father."

" Why, yes, you'd enjoy that, I'm sure," Charlotte said with quick relief. " You could leave here early in the morning and spend the whole day on the sands. Just the very thing," she repeated, her narrow lips closing with a snap.

So that was settled. Mr. Philpotts gave a faint sigh and picked up his book again. But instead of the print on the page, he saw hot, yellow sands ; glazed blue water ; little sail boats dotted meaninglessly about. Crowds drinking ginger beer out of bottles. People throwing orange peel and banana skins everywhere. Greasy meals in second-rate hotels ; trains loaded with sweating humanity ; screaming children and tired, irritated women. Everyone thrusting and pushing him about.

He sighed again. He had looked forward to quite a different sort of holiday. But,

of course, if the girls were giving a party he would have to be out of the way.

" I'm sorry about the window frames," he said, with a note of regret in his voice ; " it would have been such a good chance to paint them. I could have given them a second coat on Saturday."

He saw their looks of disdain and he retired hastily into his book. He felt a shade embarrassed that he should have spoken of anything so commonplace as window frames. An apologetic expression came over his round face, and he looked from one to the other a shade wistfully. He wanted so much to please them. He was so proud of them all. Evelyn who could play such delicate notes on the piano, fantastic arias and light tripping mazurkas with such ease and deftness. Adele who had such a concise way of speaking, clipping her words as though they were bright little bits of silk, snipped off with a pair of sharp scissors. Charlotte, whose frosty manner and erect carriage he felt sure had been handed down to her as a heritage through successive generations. Charlotte and the girls always seemed to him like beautiful white swans, floating so leisurely down the smooth clear stream of their lives. He quite recognized that it was a privilege to belong to them. But he often wished that he didn't feel so hopelessly inferior.

" I believe that there's to be a Regatta on Friday," Evelyn said from the piano.

He knew that you had only to fling a glance in his direction to see just what he was. There were so many dozens like him. They filled the buses, crowded into the trains, came tumbling out of offices, short

men with receding hair and a steadily increasing waistband.

He could scarcely expect Charlotte and the girls to look up to him, to ask his opinion, or to take his advice. It would seem quite absurd if Charlotte with her forceful character were ever to appeal to him. She was so self-sufficient, so adamant. He could never imagine her asking either for his love or his pity. All he could ever give her was his admiration and respect. That was all she wanted from him.

FRIDAY, and the sun beating down from a sky that was without fleck or cloud. Mr. Philpotts thought of those white hot rays striking the wide surfaces of the water, and his flesh shrivelled.

"It's a wonderful day for a holiday," Evelyn cried, as they left the breakfast table; "you'll have a perfectly splendid time."

"Splendid," echoed Adele.

"You really should start at once, Norman"—Charlotte's tone was flurried. "You don't want to miss your train."

"I'm just starting," he said, in a flat, dull tone.

It was a pity, he thought, as he passed the front room that was already filled with little tables, that he should be so fond of his own home. So many men were only too glad to escape from their homes and families. But he liked nothing better than to potter round the house with a paint brush and a hammer.

Charlotte followed him to the door to see that he got off, brushing his cheek lightly with her lips.

"Have a good time," she said, absently, "and don't do anything foolish."

"Hang your clothes on a hickory bush, but don't go near the water," ran absurdly through his mind at the intonation of her voice. But he immediately made a mental apology to Charlotte. She hadn't intended her tone to sound like that. It was just that she was so anxious to see him started on his way, so that she could attend to her preparations for the party.

His new tan shoes squeaked abominably

"That would be just the thing for Father."

as he walked down the street, which added to his feeling of discomfort as he thought of the day that was before him. It was going to be one of those blistering days on the sands. The air was already heavy and thick. He ran his fingers around the edge of his collar where it pressed moist and tight against his neck, and thought of the cool fragrance of the house, with its large dim rooms filled with vases of flowers, its awnings over every window to shut out the cruel glare.

The trains were crowded as he had expected. The sands swarmed with human beings. No one seemed to object to the scorching rays of the sun that beat down on the water, except himself. He stood watching the crowds with a sensation of helplessness. Half a mile from the shore small sail boats were staggering about in a sluggish wind. He started to walk along the shore, determined if he could to escape from all these people.

He spent the entire morning walking about the sands.

" I guess you're havin' a fine holiday," a weary-looking woman remarked to him as he sat wedged in between her and a fat man in a long crowded dining-room.

He assented weakly.

IN the afternoon he managed to find a secluded corner beneath a sheer cliff. Sharp rocks rose out of the sand, affording small spots of shade. He took out his pipe and leaned against a rock, the bright blaze of the water and the blue shine of the sky forcing him to close his eyes. A gradual drowsiness stole over him.

He was awakened by the sound of shrill voices near him. People were running past him along the sands. He could hear shouts from a short distance away. He raised himself on one elbow and listened. Something had happened; someone was drowning out there on that clear blue water.

He got up and slipped his pipe into his pocket, starting towards where he could see a large crowd gathered. They were all staring up the cliffs, and as he came nearer he could make out a small white object hanging a short distance from the top.

" It's a little girl," screamed a woman beside him; " it's a dear little girl."

" Why don't they get ropes ? "

" They can't get round to the top. It's a mile to the road."

" I saw her tumble over the edge."

" She's caught by her frock."

" Oh, she'll be killed—she'll be killed."

Mr. Philpotts stared up at the cliffs at that small scrap of white, while a sick shudder went through him. Any moment she might fall the rest of the way. Apparently no one from the top of the cliffs had noticed what had happened. The child had probably wandered from one of the farmhouses on the roadside.

He looked at the sharp-pointed rocks around him and his hands clenched until the nails bit into his flesh. Charlotte had always told him that he was a sentimental fool where children were concerned. Their little hands had a way of squeezing his heart.

The crowd stood and gaped. Some men were running around calling for ropes in a distracted fashion.

" What will they do with their silly old ropes ? Oh, she'll fall, she'll fall," the woman beside Mr. Philpotts screamed shrilly; " why don't they do something ? "

" What can they do, Auntie ? No one on earth could climb that cliff ? "

" Let them go round—let them go round to the top."

" She'll fall before they get there."

" Oh, can't someone do something ? " the older woman cried, hysterically wringing her hands; " isn't there a man who can climb ? "

" No one could climb that cliff."

" Do something—oh, do something," the woman cried in anguish.

Mr. Philpotts stooped and untied the laces of his new tan shoes, laying them methodically side by side on the sand. He slipped off his coat and laid it across his shoes. Then he made a run at the low sandbank at the foot of the cliff. A shout went up from the crowd. He fell back, his hands and feet slipping over the loose sand. He made another attempt, grasped a jutting rock, and slowly drew himself up out of the sliding sand.

He stared up the straight wall of rock above him and something hardened in him. He had lived by the sea as a boy and had climbed many a cliff looking for sea birds' eggs. In those days he would not have considered this such an impossible climb. But he had been young and agile then. Now it would be a fight against the years of easy living. He was breathing heavily even after the run up the sandbank. And that was nothing at all.

He looked with a practised eye at the sheer wall and noted tiny crevices, small ledges where he could place his fingers and toes. There were tufts of grass where he could pause to rest, if they could afford him a foothold.

A sharp rock cut through his sock, and seemed to burn the skin from his foot. The sickening pain almost made him cry out. Sweat poured down his face, blinding him. He found a crevice and shut his eyes for an instant, resting motionless.

He must be more careful. That little child's life depended upon his climbing that cliff. If he fell back now, that little helpless bundle would fall a shapeless huddle on those pitiless rocks below.

He glanced up at the speck of white, like a cloud against the sky, determination hardening his muscles. As long as that spur of rock held she was safe. Fortunately she wasn't struggling. Perhaps she had been stunned by the fall. He must reach her before she regained consciousness.

He saw the way that he must take as he went slowly zig-zagging up the face of the cliff. The child was not far from the top, and from there, he remembered, the cliff receded. That would be their salvation.

At moments the rock crumbled under him. He could hear fragments falling—falling and then silence. Just as he would fall if his foot slipped, if his hands let go. He trembled with exhaustion.

Below the crowd waited, tense and breathless. Occasionally an exclamation broke from one of the men, a half cry from a woman with children clinging to her skirts.

" He can't do it—oh, he can't," cried a woman in despair.

" He should never have tried it. He's too old a man."

" If he doesn't get there, who will ? "

" There—he's falling."

A low murmur rose from the crowds as they saw him swing for an instant by one hand, then pull himself up to a higher spur of rock. The boats in the bay had crept close to the shore, drifting with flopping sails, while the men watched the progress of that little figure climbing the cliffs.

" He's game. I shouldn't be surprised if he did it after all."

" Ah, he can't. Look at the bit he has to go. It's like the side of a house."

Again a muffled murmur like the slow beat of the tide rose from the crowds that were watching. Mr. Philpotts had forgotten the people below. In all existence there was but the child, himself, and the cruel rocks between. He was conscious of a great stillness, as though all sound had stopped ; as though Nature stood by breathless.

Up and up, blood dripping from his feet, blood dripping from his hands, as though nails were driven through the flesh. Up and up, while his breath was like something thrust down his throat to strangle him.

And as he climbed the beat of his heart sounded in his ears like great strong chords struck from an instrument by infinite hands. He forgot the pain that was his feet, the agony that was his hands, the sweat that poured down his face like rain. A sob rose in his throat, and a great fullness swelled in him that gave courage to his bleeding feet, strength and power to his tortured hands. He was climbing now, boldly, from crumbling ledge to slipping boulder, with a wild clear joy within him.

Faster he was moving and always faster, without pausing to gauge the width of each ledge, without testing the support for his hands. He felt himself to be no longer merely human, there was something in him that was infinite, something that was everlasting.

At length he had reached the child. As he drew her into his arms the silence around him seemed to shatter. It was as though all the wheels of all the world had been stopped for a time, and now began slowly to revolve again. There was no longer that tenseness in the air. Everything in Nature had relaxed. He could even hear the soft slow lapping of the water on the sands, the buzz of an insect's wings, the clear note of a bird overhead. The sound of the breeze in his ears was like a long-drawn sigh.

He was climbing slowly now, the child's weight a terrible burden for his arms. He could just see the curve of a baby cheek, the soft silken yellow of her hair as she lay limply against his breast.

The rock receded here and it was not so difficult, but he was so intolerably weary. It seemed to him an age before he managed to grasp at the overhanging root of a pine tree standing on the cliff's edge. With a last desperate effort he lifted the child and thrust her into safety.

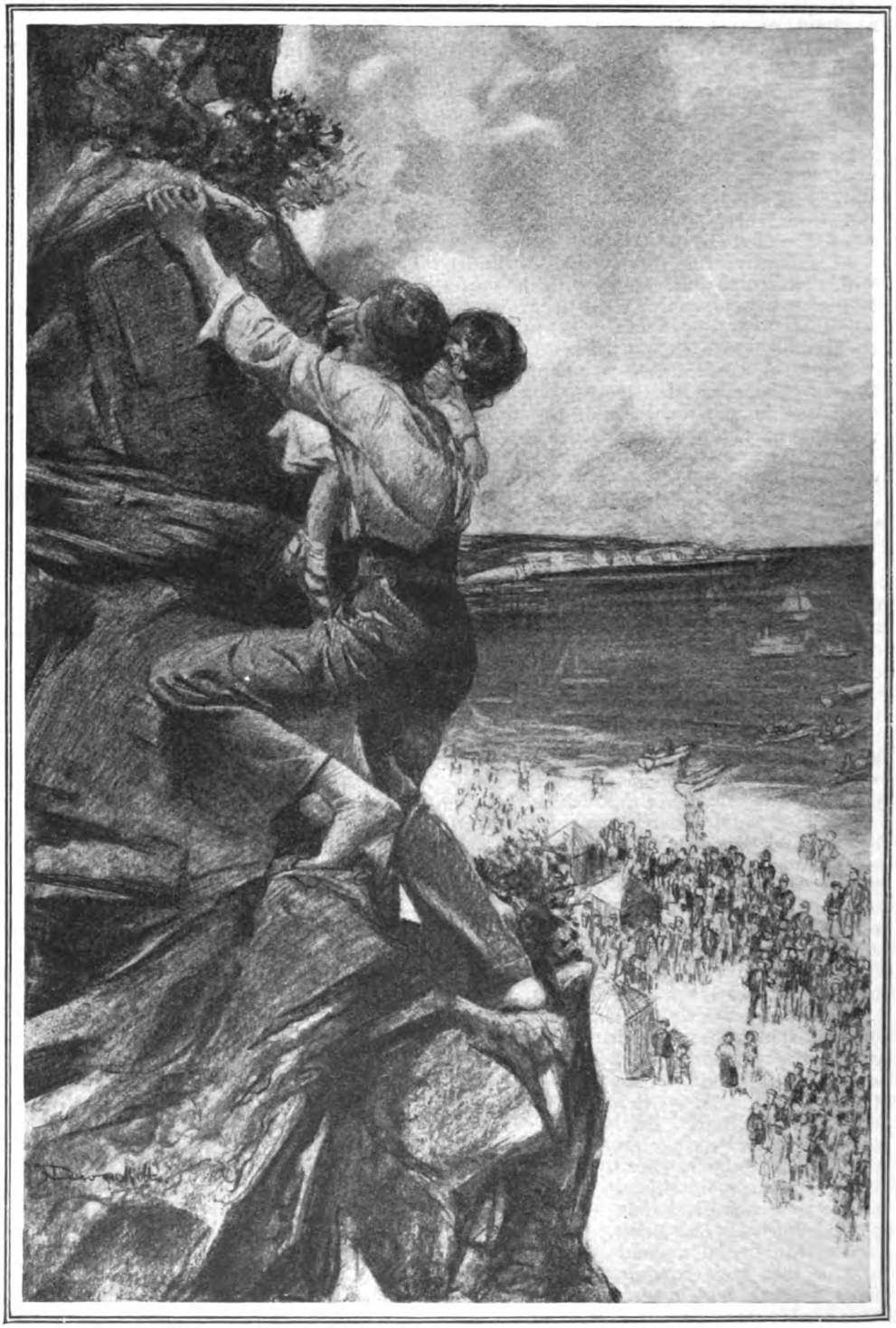
The whole air around him split with a long ringing sound. It was as though all the seas of all the world had burst their silver boundaries and escaped foaming over the earth. That sound was like nothing he had ever heard before, a long loud roar, increasing and increasing in volume. The earth seemed to shiver beneath him.

He was dazed, puzzled by that sound, while he still clung to the overhanging root. Then, slowly, he dragged himself up and crawled over the edge, to lie exhausted on the grass beside the child.

Still the loud roar increased. He began dimly to realize that it was the sound of cheering—crowds shouting as he had never heard crowds shout before. The shout of a people whose hearts had been wrung with strong emotion.

He peered over the edge and saw the lifted faces of the crowd. At the sight of him the cheers broke out louder than before. Men were frantically waving their hats ; women waved their handkerchiefs ; some seemed to be sobbing with hysterical relief.

Why, he had done nothing to deserve all this. He had only done what he had set out to do—what he had to do. It was impossible to think of that little child being crushed on those hideous rocks. It had been his affair to see that she wasn't—so little and weak and soft as she was.



He was climbing slowly now, the child's weight a terrible burden for his arms.

The cheering was dying down. He was thankful that he wouldn't have to face those excited crowds. He would take the little frightened child home, and then when the beach was deserted he could recover his clothes.

IT was the following morning at breakfast. It had been so late when he had finally reached home the night before that Charlotte and the girls had gone off to bed.

"Whatever have you done to your hands?" Evelyn exclaimed, as he helped himself to a slice of toast.

He flushed.

"I hurt them yesterday."

"I should think you did," Adele remarked crisply, "they look simply too awful."

"Listen to this," Evelyn exclaimed as she pored over the morning paper between sips of coffee. "Here's something about a man at the Regatta yesterday who climbed one of those terrible cliffs to save a child's life. It says it was the most wonderful exhibition of courage. And this is funny, they can't find out who the man is. When they looked for him he had disappeared."

"Why didn't you tell us about it?" Adele inquired.

"Didn't you see it? Weren't you there?"

"Yes—oh, yes."

"Here's something more about it on this page. Well, I must say I call it rather splendid. He must have been a brave man to have climbed those cliffs. It says that the crowd expected to see him fall and be killed every instant. And all for a child he had never seen. It's wonderful to think of a man doing a thing like that."

"Yes, indeed it is," put in Charlotte; "most men are so selfish."

"It says that they are trying to find out who it was. They want to give him a medal for life-saving."

"Tell us about it," exclaimed Adele, imperatively. "Didn't you see him? What was he like?"

A slow painful colour burned in his face. He felt as though his voice had died in him. So they thought he was brave; they thought he had done something splendid. But he knew that really wasn't so. He was glad that they thought he had done something at last that was worth doing.

The room grew blurred before him and the pattern on his plate became just blobs of colour. He was so glad that they were pleased with what he had done.

"Well, you see," he said, breathing with difficulty, "it was—why, it was—myself."

There was a breathless pause. He lifted his eyes from his plate and could see them all looking from one to the other, with queer startled expressions. He glanced across the table at Charlotte and gave a faint smile, hoping that he wasn't appearing self-conscious and silly. But Charlotte's eyes were fixed upon him with an expression that he couldn't make out. He was puzzled and at a loss to understand.

"You mean, Norman, that you climbed those dreadful cliffs at your age to save a child?"

Her voice cut through the still room.

He nodded, and looked down at his plate. His hands twitched with nervousness.

"Well, I've never heard of such a thing in my life. Of all the dreadful selfishness!"

"Do you mean to say, Father, that you never thought of us?"

"Don't you know that if you had been killed we should only have had your wretched insurance to live on?"

"Imagine!" Charlotte's voice made him think of tinkling ice. "We should have been simply paupers."

Reproach in every word, in every tone of their voices. He sat back, crushed, while they stared at him with cold, angry eyes.

Selfish. Why, of course he had been selfish. He had never thought of that while he climbed those cliffs. He had been filled instead with a curious exhilaration. He had forgotten them; he had forgotten himself; he had forgotten the smooth clear stream down which their lives must flow. A man had no right to risk his life when he had a family to support. They were quite right. He should have remembered them. He had been wantonly selfish.

But—as he sat in silence, his eyes fixed on his plate, he felt suddenly, to his absolute bewilderment, for some reason that he could not altogether fathom, so sorry for Charlotte, for Adele and Evelyn, so bitterly sorry for them all.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

815.—THE SHORTEST DRAUGHTS GAME.

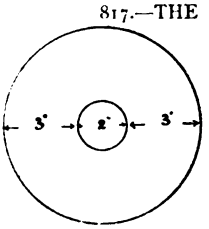
I RECENTLY came across the following puzzle, propounded by the late Sam Loyd. "One game of draughts was played and brought to an absolute finish in just twelve moves! If I am not mistaken it holds the record for brevity of checker play. Can you produce such a game?" The answer that he gives in another place is (probably due to an unprecedented

number of printer's errors) quite unintelligible. I have handed it to an expert player at the game, but he has not succeeded in correcting it or producing any such game. So as a mere novice at Draughts I have just tackled it myself and found a solution. Perhaps readers can do the same. There is no capture throughout, the laws of play are strictly observed, and the twelfth move of black results in an absolute win.

816.—THE BARMAN'S PUZZLE.

A MAN entered a tavern and said, "Give me as much money as I have in my pocket, and I will spend sixpence." The barman did so. The man spent sixpence and went away. He went to a second tavern and said exactly the same. The man spent sixpence and left. He went to a third inn and repeated the request, spent his sixpence and went away. He had then no money whatever. How much had he when he entered the first tavern?

817.—THE PAPER RIBBON.



IN telegraph offices the paper ribbon used in the instruments is supplied in rolls. The rolls are 8 inches in diameter. In the centre of the roll there is an open space 2 inches in diameter, as in the illustration. The paper itself is, say $\frac{1}{250}$ of an inch in thickness. What is the approximate length of paper in the roll?

818.—SUNRISE AND SUNSET.

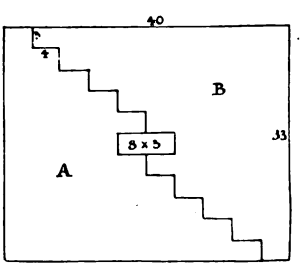
THE glorious sun . . . . . forth, the bright moon . . . . .,
In brilliant flowers each ordered . . . . . stands.
The lover urges once again his . . . . .
And swears that . . . . . of time no change can make
In his strong love, and pleads for marriage . . . . .
The sun has gone, and now, if you should . . . . . ,
One letter add—we soon shall be . . . . . .

In this puzzle (by A. E.) the first six words all contain the same five letters differently arranged, and in the last two words the same five letters with one and the same additional letter.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

809.—A CARPET PUZZLE.

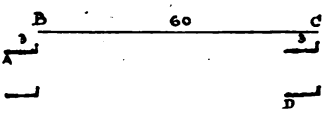
THE diagram shows clearly how the carpet should be cut. Those steps are all 4 feet in length and 3 feet



in height and if B is moved up one step on A a perfect square will be formed. The experienced solver would recognize at once the fact that the puzzle is solved on what is called the step principle. He would therefore say the area of the original carpet was 1,320 square feet: as this has been reduced by 24 square feet, what is left contains 1,296 square feet. We must therefore make the carpet 36 x 36. Then he will know that its length has to be reduced by 4 feet, which must be the width of the steps, and, since the height is to be increased by 3 feet, that is necessarily the height of the steps. The rest is quite easy. You see, it all depends on whether or not it occurs to you to apply that step principle.

810.—THE PEDESTRIAN PASSENGER.

ASSUME that the train runs for an hour and that it is itself of the absurd length of 3 miles. Then, as in the diagram, the train will have gone from B to C=60 miles, but the passenger will have gone from A to C, or 63 miles. On the other hand if he walks from the



front to the rear of the train the train will have gone from B to C (again 60 miles) while the passenger will have gone from B to D=57 miles. So that in our first case the man would be travelling over the permanent way at the rate of 63 miles per hour, and in the second case 57 miles per hour.

811.—NAMING HIS SONS.

THE man's name was LANDOR and he gave his sons the names ROLAND, ARNOLD, RONALD, and ORLANDO, all containing the same six letters, though we were told that in the last case "nought we'll need to add," and this accounts for the second O in the word.

812.—CUBE DIFFERENCES.

THE cube of 642 is 264609288 and the cube of 641 is 263374721, the difference being 1234567 as required.

813.—KNIGHT ERRANTRY.

1 Kt—Q B 3, 1 Kt—K B 3 (the only way to prevent White playing Kt—K 4, after which he could not be stopped from mating at Q 6, the pawns not being allowed to capture); 2 Kt—Kt 5, 2 Kt—K 5 (the only way to stop Kt—Q 6 mate); 3 Kt—K B 3, 3 Kt—Q B 3; (if white now moves his K Kt, Black goes to K 4 and wins. If he plays K Kt—Kt 5, Black will not, of course, take the Kt but will still play Q Kt—K 4) 4 Q Kt—Q 6 ch., 4 Kt x Kt; 5 Kt moves, 5 Kt—K 4 and mates next moves. If White play 4 Q Kt elsewhere, 4 Kt—Q B 4; 5 Kt—K 5 (forced), 5 Kt x Kt, and mate next move. Black thus forces checkmate under the curious conditions in the required six moves.

814.—PALINDROMES.

THE only letters that cannot begin and end an English palindrome, so far as I know, are F, J, Q, U, V, X, Y. I will give examples of the other letters in order. Anna, Bib, Civic, Deified, Eve, Gig, Hannah, Iki (Japanese Island), Kayak (fishing boat of seal skin), Level, Madam, Noon, Otto, Peep, Reviver, Sexes, Tenet, Wow-wow (Long-armed ape), Ziz (II. Chronicles 20, 16).

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for September, 1926.

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Frontispiece: "Now look, Father! If they do not meet your eye at first, turn this nicked edge here, left or right-handed."
"I have not forgotten," said the Abbot, taking his place.

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SEPTEMBER, 1926.

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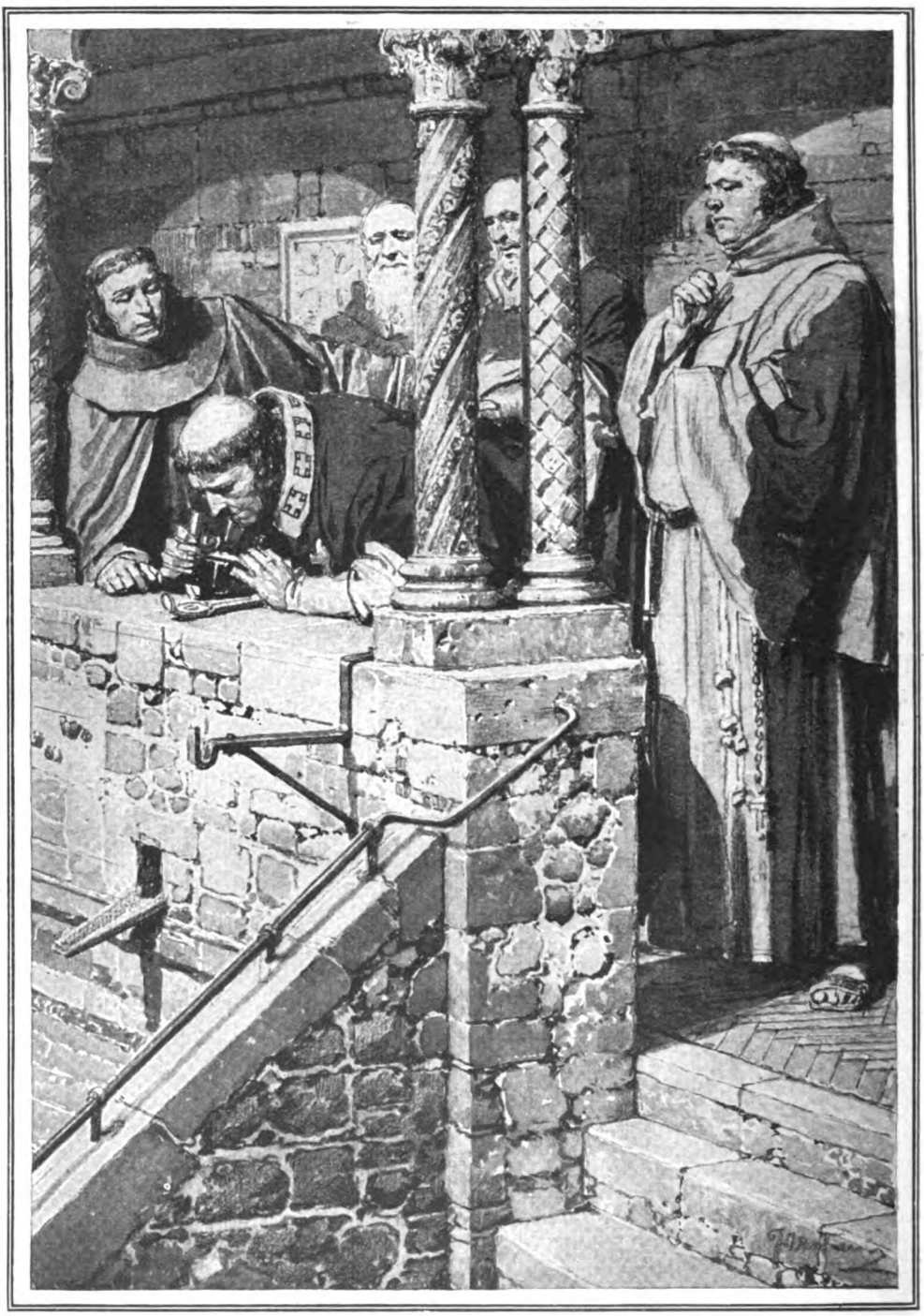
SHERLOCK HOLMES

STORIES

By

A. CONAN DOYLE



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(See page 224.)

THE EYE OF ALLAH

By

RUDYARD KIPLING

Illustrated by
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THE Cantor of St. Illod's being far too enthusiastic a musician to concern himself with its Library, the Sub-Cantor, who idolized every detail of the work, was tidying up, after two hours' writing and dictation in the Scriptorium. The copying-monks handed him in their sheets—it was a plain Four Gospels ordered by an Abbot at Evesham—and filed out to vespers. John Otho, better known as John of Burgos, took no heed. He was burnishing a tiny boss of gold in his miniature of the Annunciation for his Gospel of St. Luke, which it was hoped that Cardinal Falcodi, the Papal Legate, might later be pleased to accept.

"Break off, John," said the Sub-Cantor in an undertone.

"Eh? Gone, have they? I never heard. Hold a minute, Clement."

The Sub-Cantor waited patiently. He had known John more than a dozen years, coming and going at St. Illod's, to which monastery John, when abroad, always said he belonged. The claim was gladly allowed for, more even than other Fitz Otho's, he seemed to carry all the Arts under his hand, and most of their practical receipts under his hood.

The Sub-Cantor looked over his shoulder at the pinned-down sheet where the first words of the Magnificat were built up in gold washed with red-lac for a background to the Virgin's hardly yet fired halo. She was shown, hands joined in wonder, at a lattice of infinitely intricate arabesque, round the edges of which sprays of orange-bloom seemed to load the blue hot air that carried back over the minute parched landscape in the middle distance.

"You've made her all Jewess," said the Sub-Cantor, studying the olive-flushed cheek and the eyes charged with foreknowledge.

"What else was Our Lady?" John slipped out the pins. "Listen, Clement. If I do not come back, this goes into my Great Luke, whoever finishes it." He slid the drawing between its guard-papers.

"Then you're for Burgos again—as I heard?"

"In two days. The new Cathedral yonder—but they're slower than the Wrath of God, those masons—is good for the soul."

"*Thy* soul?" The Sub-Cantor seemed doubtful.

"Even mine, by your permission. And down south—on the edge of the Conquered Countries—Granada way—there's some Moorish diaper-work that's wholesome. It allays vain thought and draws it toward the picture—as you felt, just now, in my Annunciation."

"She—it was very beautiful. No wonder you go. But you'll not forget your absolution, John?"

"Surely." This was a precaution John no more omitted on the eve of his travels than he did the recutting of the tonsure which he had provided himself with in his youth, somewhere near Ghent. The mark gave him privilege of clergy at a pinch, and a certain consideration on the road always.

"You'll not forget, either, what we need in the Scriptorium. There's no more true ultramarine in this world now. They mix it with that German blue. And as for vermilion——"

"I'll do my best always."

"And Brother Thomas (this was the

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Infirmarian in charge of the monastery hospital) he needs——"

"He'll do his own asking. I'll go over his side now, and get me re-tonsured."

John went down the stairs to the lane that divides the hospital and cook-house from the back cloisters. While he was being barbered, Brother Thomas (St. Illod's meek but deadly persistent Infirmarian) gave him a list of drugs that he was to bring back from Spain by hook, crook, or lawful purchase. Here they were surprised by the lame, dark Abbot Stephen, in his fur-lined night-boots. Not that Stephen de Sautré was any spy; but as a young man he had shared an unlucky Crusade, which had ended, after a battle at Mansura, in two years' captivity among the Saracens at Cairo where men learn to walk softly. A fair huntsman and hawker, a reasonable disciplinarian but a man of science above all, and a Doctor of Medicine under one Ranulphus, Canon of St. Paul's, his heart was more in the monastery's hospital work than its religious. He checked their list interestedly, adding items of his own. After the Infirmarian had withdrawn, he gave John generous absolution, to cover lapses by the way; for he did not hold with chance-bought Indulgences.

"And what seek you *this* journey?" he demanded, sitting on the bench beside the mortar and scales in the little warm cell for stored drugs.

"Devils, mostly," said John, grinning.

"In Spain? Are not Abana and Pharphar —— ?"

John, to whom men were but matter for drawings, and well-born to boot (since he was a de Sanford on his mother's side), looked the Abbot full in the face and—"Did *you* find it so?" said he.

"No. They were in Cairo too. But what's your special need of 'em?"

"For my Great Luke. He's the master-hand of all Four when it comes to devils."

"No wonder. He was a physician. You're not."

"Heaven forbid! But I'm weary of our Church-pattern devils. They're only apes and goats and poultry conjoined. 'Good enough for plain red-and-black Hells and Judgment Days—but not for me."

"What makes you so choice in them?"

"Because it stands to reason and Art that there are all musters of devils in Hell's dealings. Those Seven, for example, that were haled out of the Magdalene. They'd be she-devils—no kin at all to the beaked and horned and bearded devils-general."

The Abbot laughed.

"And see again! The devil that came out of the dumb man. What use is snout or bill to *him?* He'd be faceless as a leper. Above all—God send I live to do it!—the devils that entered the Gadarene Swine. They'd be—they'd be—I know not yet what they'd be, but they'd be surpassing devils. I'd have 'em diverse as the Saints themselves. But now they're all one pattern, for wall, window, or picture-work."

"Go on, John. You're deeper in this mystery than I."

"Heaven forbid! But I say there's a respect due to devils, damned tho' they be."

"Dangerous doctrine!"

"My meaning is that if the shape of anything be worth man's thought to picture to man, it's worth his best thought."

"That's safer. But I'm glad I've given you Absolution."

"There's no risk for a craftsman who deals with the outside shapes of things—for Mother Church's glory."

"Maybe so, but John"—the Abbot's hand almost touched John's sleeve—"tell me, now, is—is she Moorish or—or Hebrew?"

"She's mine," John returned.

"Is that enough?"

"I have found it so."

"Well—ah well! It's out of my jurisdiction, but—how do they look at it down yonder?"

"Oh, they drive nothing to a head in Spain—neither Church nor King, bless 'em! There's too many Moors and Jews to kill them all, and if they chased 'em away there'd be no trade nor farming. Trust me, in the Conquered Countries, from Seville to Granada, we live lovingly enough together—Spaniard, Moor, and Jew. Ye see, *we* ask no questions."

"Yes—yes," Stephen sighed. "And always there's the hope she may be converted."

"Oh yes, there's always hope."

The Abbot went on into the hospital. It was an easy age before Rome tightened the screw as to clerical connections. If the lady were not too forward, or the son too much his father's beneficiary in ecclesiastical preferments and levies, a good deal was overlooked. But, as the Abbot had reason to recall, unions between Christian and Infidel led to sorrow. None the less, when John, with mule, mails, and man, clattered off down the lane for Southampton and the sea, Stephen envied him.

HE was back, twenty months later, in good hard case, and loaded down with fairings. A lump of richest lazuli, a bar of orange-hearted vermilion, and a small packet of dried beetles which make most glorious scarlet, for the Sub-Cantor. Besides that, a few cubes of milky marble, with yet a pink flush in them, which could be

slaked and ground down to incomparable background-stuff. There were quite half the drugs that the Abbot and Thomas had demanded, and there was a long deep-red cornelian necklace for the Abbot's Lady—Anne of Norton. She received it graciously, and asked where John had come by it.

"Near Granada," he said.

"You left all well there?" Anne asked. (Maybe the Abbot had told her something of John's confession.)

"I left all in the hands of God."

"Ah me! How long since?"

"Four months less eleven days."

"Were you—with her?"

"In my arms. Childbed."

"And?"

"The boy too. There is nothing now."

Anne of Norton caught her breath.

"I think you'll be glad of that," she said after a while.

"Give me time, and maybe I'll compass it. But not now."

"You have your handwork and your art and—John—remember there's no jealousy in the grave."

"Ye-es! I have my Art, and Heaven knows I'm jealous of none."

"Thank God for that at least," said Anne of Norton, the always ailing woman who followed the Abbot with her sunk eyes. "And be sure I shall treasure this," she touched the beads, "as long as I shall live."

"I brought—trusted—it to you for that," he replied, and took leave. When she told

John was back, twenty months later, in good hard case, and loaded down with fairings.

the Abbot how she had come by it, he said nothing, but as he and Thomas were storing the drugs that John handed over in the cell which backs on to the hospital kitchen-chimney, he observed, of a cake of dried poppy-juice: "This has power to cut off all pain from a man's body."

"I have seen it," said John.

"But for pain of the soul there is, outside God's Grace, but one drug; and that is a man's craft, learning, or other helpful motion of his own mind."

"That is coming to me, too," was the answer.

John spent the next fair May day out in the woods with the monastery swineherd and all the porkers; and returned loaded with flowers and sprays of spring, to his own carefully kept place in the north bay of the Scriptorium. There with his travelling sketch-books under his left elbow, he sunk himself past all recollections in his Great Luke.

Brother Martin, Senior Copyist (who spoke about once a fortnight), ventured to ask, later, how the work was going.

"All here!" John tapped his forehead with his pencil. "It has been only waiting these months to—ah God!—be born. Are ye free of your plain-copying, Martin?"

Brother Martin nodded. It was his pride that John of Burgos turned to him, in spite of his seventy years, for really good page-work.

"Then see!" John laid out a new vellum—thin but flawless. "There's no better than this sheet from here to Paris. Yes! Smell it if you choose. Wherefore—give me the compasses and I'll set it out for you—if ye make one letter lighter or darker than its next, I'll stick ye like a pig."

"Never, John!" the old man beamed happily.

"But I will! Now, follow! Here and here, as I prick, and in script of just this height to the hair-breadth, ye'll scribe the thirty-first and thirty-second verses of Eighth Luke."

"Yes, the Gadarene Swine! '*And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the abyss. And there was a herd of many swine*——'" Brother Martin naturally knew all the Gospels by heart.

"Just so! Down to '*and he suffered them.*' Take your time to it. My Magdalene has to come off my heart first."

Brother Martin achieved the work so perfectly that John stole some soft sweetmeats from the Abbot's kitchen for his reward. The old man ate them; then repented; then confessed and insisted on penance. At which the Abbot, knowing there was but one way to reach the real sinner, set him a book called *De Virtutibus Herbarum* to fair-copy. St. Illod's had borrowed it from the gloomy Cistercians, who do not hold with pretty things, and the crabbed text kept Martin busy just when John wanted him for some rather specially spaced letterings.

"See now," said the Sub-Cantor, improvingly. "You should not do such things, John. Here's Brother Martin on penance for your sake——"

"No—for my Great Luke. But I've paid the Abbot's cook. I've drawn him till his own scullions cannot keep straight-faced. *He'll* not tell again."

"Unkindly done! And you're out of favour with the Abbot too. He's made no sign to you since you came back—never asked you to high table."

"I've been busy. Having eyes in his head, Stephen knew it. Clement, there's no Librarian from Durham to Torre fit to clean up after you."

The Sub-Cantor stood on guard; he knew where John's compliments generally ended.

"But outside the Scriptorium——"

"Where I never go." The Sub-Cantor had been excused even digging in the garden, lest it should mar his wonderful book-binding hands.

"In all things outside the Scriptorium you are the master-fool of Christendie. Take it from me, Clement. I've met many."

"I take everything from you," Clement smiled benignly. "You use me worse than a singing-boy."

They could hear one of that suffering breed in the cloister below, squalling as the Cantor pulled his hair.

"God love you! So I do. But have you ever thought how I lie and steal daily on my travels—yes, and for aught you know, murder—to fetch you colours and earths?"

"True," said just and conscience-stricken Clement. "I have often thought that were I in the world—which God forbid!—I might be a strong thief in some matters."

Even Brother Martin, bent above his loathed *De Virtutibus*, laughed.

BUT about mid-summer, Thomas the Infirmarian conveyed to John the Abbot's invitation to supper in his house that night, with the request that he would bring with him anything that he had done for his Great Luke.

"What's toward?" said John, who had been wholly shut up in his work.

"Only one of his 'wisdom' dinners. You've sat at a few since you were a man."

"True: and mostly good. How would Stephen have us——?"

"Gown and hood over all. There will be a doctor from Salerno—one Roger, an Italian

Wise and famous with the knife on the body. He's been in the Infirmary some ten days, helping me—even me!"

"'Never heard the name. But our Stephen's *physicus* before *sacerdos*, always."

"And his Lady has a sickness of some time. Roger came hither in chief because of her."

"Did he? Now I think of it, I have not seen the Lady Anne for a while."

"Ye've seen nothing for a long while. She has been housed near a month—they have to carry her abroad now."

"So bad as that, then?"

"Roger of Salerno will not yet say what he thinks. But——"

"God pity Stephen! . . . Who else at table, beside thee?"

"An Oxford friar. Roger is his name also. A learned and famous philosopher. And he holds his liquor too, valiantly."

"Three doctors—counting Stephen. I've always found that means two atheists."

Thomas looked uneasily down his nose. "That's a wicked proverb," he stammered. "You should not use it."

"Hoh! Never come you the monk over me, Thomas! You've been Infirmarian at St. Illod's eleven years—and a lay-brother still. Why have you never taken orders, all this while?"

"I—I am not worthy."

"Ten times worthier than that new fat swine—Henry Who's-his-name—that takes the Infirmary Masses. He bullocks in with the Viaticum, under your nose, when a sick man's only faint from being bled. So the man dies—of pure fear. Ye know it! I've watched your face at such times. Take Orders, Didymus. You'll have a little more medicine and a little less Mass with your sick then; and they'll live longer."

"I am unworthy—unworthy," Thomas repeated pitifully.

"Not you—but—to your own master you stand or fall. And now that my work releases me for awhile, I'll drink with any philosopher out of any school. And Thomas," he coaxed, "a hot bath for me in the Infirmary before vespers."

WHEN the Abbot's perfectly cooked and served meal had ended, and the deep-fringed naperies were removed, and the Prior had sent in the keys with word that all was fast in the Monastery, and the keys had been duly returned with the word: "Make it so till Prime," the Abbot and his guests went out to cool themselves in an upper cloister that took them, by way of the leads, to the South Choir side of the Triforium. The summer sun was still strong, for it was barely six o'clock, but the Abbey Church, of course, lay in her wonted darkness. Lights were being lit for choir-practice thirty feet below.

"Our Cantor gives them no rest," the Abbot whispered. "Stand by this pillar and we'll hear what he's driving them at now."

"Remember all!" the Cantor's hard voice came up. "This is the soul of Bernard himself, attacking our evil world. Take it quicker than yesterday, and throw all your words clean-bitten from you. In the loft there! Begin!"

The organ broke out for an instant, alone and raging. Then the voices crashed together into that first fierce line of the "*De Contemptu Mundi.*"*

"*Hora novissima—tempora pessima*"—a dead pause till the assenting *sunt* broke, like a sob, out of the darkness, and one boy's voice, clearer than silver trumpets, returned the long-drawn *vigilemus*.

"*Ecce minaciter, imminet Arbiter*" (organ and voices were leashed together in terror and warning, breaking away liquidly to the "*ille supremus*"). Then the tone-colours shifted for the prelude to—"*Imminet, imminet, ut mala terminet*——"

"Stop! Again!" cried the Cantor; and gave his reasons a little more roundly than was natural at choir-practice.

"Ah! 'Pity o' man's vanity! He's guessed we are here. Come away!" said the Abbot. Anne of Norton, in her carried chair, had been listening too, further along the dark Triforium, with Roger of Salerno. John heard her sob. On the way back, he asked Thomas how her health stood. Before Thomas could reply the sharp-featured Italian doctor pushed between them. "Following on our talk together, I judged it best to tell her," said he to Thomas.

"What?" John asked simply enough.

"What she knew already." Roger of Salerno launched into a Greek quotation to the effect that every woman knows all about everything.

"I have no Greek," said John stiffly. Roger of Salerno had been giving them a good deal of it, at dinner.

"Then I'll come to you in Latin. Ovid hath it neatly. '*Utque malum late solet immedicabile cancer*——' but doubtless you know the rest, worthy Sir."

"Alas! My school-Latin's but what I've gathered by the way from fools professing to heal sick women. '*Hocus-pocus*——' but doubtless you know the rest, worthy Sir."

Roger of Salerno was quite quiet till they regained the dining-room, where the fire had been comforted and the dates, raisins, ginger, figs, and cinnamon-scented sweetmeats set out, with the choicer wines, on the after-table. The Abbot seated himself, drew off his ring, dropped it, that all might

* Hymn No. 226, A. and M., "The world is very evil."

hear the tinkle, into an empty silver cup, stretched his feet towards the hearth, and looked at the great gilt and carved rose in the barrel-roof. The silence that keeps from Compline to Matins had closed on their world. The bull-necked Friar watched a ray of sunlight split itself into colours on the rim of a crystal salt-cellar; Roger of Salerno had re-opened some discussion with Brother Thomas on a type of spotted fever that was baffling them both in England and abroad; John took note of the keen profile, and—it might serve as a note for the Great Luke—his hand moved to his bosom. The Abbot saw, and nodded permission. John whipped out silver-point and sketch-book.

"Nay—modesty is good enough—but deliver your own opinion," the Italian was urging the Infirmarian. Out of courtesy to the foreigner nearly all the talk was in table-Latin; more formal and more copious than monk's patter. Thomas began with his meek stammer.

"I confess myself at a loss for the cause of the fever unless—as Varro saith in his *De Re Rustica*—certain small animals which the eye cannot follow enter the body by the nose and mouth, and set up grave diseases. On the other hand, this is not in Scripture."

Roger of Salerno hunched head and shoulders like an angry cat. "Always *that!*" he said, and John snatched down the twist of the thin lips.

"Never at rest, John," the Abbot smiled at the artist. "You should break off every two hours for prayers, as we do. St. Benedict was no fool. Two hours is all that a man can carry the edge of his eye or hand."

"For copyists—yes. Brother Martin is not sure after one hour. But when a man's work takes him, he must go on till it lets him go."

"Yes, that is the Demon of Socrates," the Friar from Oxford rumbled above his cup.

"The doctrine leans toward presumption," said the Abbot. "Remember, 'Shall mortal man be more just than his Maker'?'"

"There is no danger of justice"; the Friar spoke bitterly. "But at least Man might be suffered to go forward in his Art or his thought. Yet if Mother Church sees or hears him move anyward, what says she? 'No!' Always 'No.'"

"But if the little animals of Varro be invisible"—this was Roger of Salerno to Thomas—"how are we any nearer to a cure?"

"By experiment"—the Friar wheeled round on them suddenly. "By reason and experiment. The one is useless without the other. But Mother Church——"

"Ay!" Roger de Salerno dashed at the fresh bait like a pike. "Listen, Sirs. Her bishops—our Princes—strew our roads in Italy with carcasses that they make for their pleasure or wrath. Beautiful corpses! Yet if I—if we doctors—so much as raise the skin of one of them to look at God's fabric beneath, what says Mother Church? 'Sacrilege! Stick to your pigs and dogs, or you burn!'"

"And not Mother Church only," the Friar chimed in. "*Every* way we are barred—barred by the words of some man, dead a thousand years, which are held final. Who is any son of Adam that his one say-so should close a door towards truth? I would not except even Peter Peregrinus, my own great teacher."

"Nor I Paul of Aegina," Roger of Salerno cried. "Listen, Sirs! Here is case to the very point. Apuleius affirmeth, if a man eat fasting of the juice of the cut-leaved buttercup—*sceleratus* we call it, which means 'rascally'"—this with a condescending nod towards John—"his soul will leave his body laughing. Now this is the lie more dangerous than truth, since truth of a sort is in it."

"He's away!" whispered the Abbot, despairingly.

"For the juice of that herb, I know by experiment, burns, blisters, and wries the mouth. I know also the *rictus*, or pseudo-laughter on the face of such as have perished by the strong poisons of herbs allied to this ranunculus. Certainly that spasm resembles laughter. It seems then, in my judgment, that Apuleius, having seen the body of one thus poisoned, went off at score and wrote that the man died laughing."

"Neither staying to observe, nor to confirm observation by experiment," added the Friar, frowning.

STEPHEN the Abbot cocked an eyebrow toward John.

"How think *you?*" said he.

"I'm no doctor," John returned, "but I'd say Apuleius in all these years might have been betrayed by his copyists. They take shortcuts to save 'emselves trouble. Put case that Apuleius wrote the soul *seems to* leave the body laughing, after this poison. There's not three copyists in five (*my* judgment) would not leave out the 'seems to.' For who'd question Apuleius? If it seemed so to him, so it must be. Otherwise any child knows cut-leaved buttercup."

"Have you knowledge of herbs?" Roger of Salerno asked curtly.

"Only, that when I was a boy in convent, I've made tetters round my mouth and on my neck with buttercup-juice, to save going to prayer o' cold nights."

"Ah!" said Roger. "I profess no

knowledge of tricks." He turned aside, stiffly.

"No matter! Now for your own tricks, John," the tactful Abbot broke in. "You shall show the doctors your Magdalene and your Gadarene Swine and the devils."

"Devils? Devils? *I* have produced devils by means of drugs; and have abolished them by the same means. Whether devils be external to mankind or immanent, I have not yet pronounced." Roger of Salerno was still angry.

"Ye dare not," snapped the Friar from Oxford. "Mother Church makes Her own devils."

"Not wholly! Our John has come back from Spain with brand-new ones." Abbot Stephen took the vellum handed to him, and laid it tenderly on the table. They gathered to look. The Magdalene was drawn in palest, almost transparent, grisaille, against a raging, swaying background of woman-faced devils, each broke to and by her special sin, and each, one could see, frenziedly straining against the Power that compelled her.

"I've never seen the like of this grey shadow-work," said the Abbot. "How came you by it?"

"*Non nobis!* It came to me," said John, not knowing he was a generation or so ahead of his time in the use of that medium.

"Why is she so pale?" the Friar demanded.

"Evil has all come out of her—she'd take any colour now."

"Ay, like light through glass. *I* see."

ROGER OF SALERNO was looking in silence—his nose nearer and nearer the page. "It is so," he pronounced finally. "Thus it is in epilepsy—mouth, eyes, and forehead—even to the droop of her wrist there. Every sign of it! She will need restoratives, that woman, and, afterwards, sleep natural. No poppy-juice, or she will vomit on her waking. And thereafter—but I am not in my Schools." He drew himself up. "Sir," said he, "you should be of Our calling. For, by the Snakes of Aesculapius, you *see!*"

The two struck hands as equals.

"And how think you of the Seven Devils?" the Abbot went on.

These melted into convoluted flower- or flame-like bodies, ranging in colour from phosphorescent green to the black purple of outworn iniquity, whose hearts could be traced beating through their substance. But, for sign of hope and the sane workings of life to be regained, the deep border was of conventionalized spring flowers and birds, all crowned by a kingfisher in haste, atilt through a clump of yellow iris.

Roger of Salerno identified the herbs and spoke largely of their virtues.

"And now, the Gadarene Swine," said Stephen. John laid the picture on the table.

Here were devils dishoused, in dread of being abolished to the Void, huddling and hurtling together to force lodgment by every opening into the brute bodies offered. Some of the swine fought the invasion, foaming and jerking; some were surrendering to it, sleepily, as to a luxurious back-scratching; others, wholly possessed, whirled off in bucking droves for the lake beneath. In one corner the freed man stretched out his limbs all restored to his control, and Our Lord, seated, looked at him as questioning what he would make of his deliverance.

"Devils indeed!" was the Friar's comment. "But wholly a new sort."

Some devils were mere lumps, with lobes and protuberances—a hint of a fiend's face peering through jelly-like walls. And there was a family of impatient, globular devillings who had burst open the belly of their smirking parent, and were revolving desperately toward their prey. Others patterned themselves into rods, chains and ladders, single or conjoined, round the throat and jaws of a shrieking sow, from whose ear emerged the lashing, glassy tail of a devil that had made good his refuge. And there were granulated and conglomerate devils, mixed up with the foam and slaver where the attack was fiercest. Thence the eye carried on to the insanely active backs of the downward-racing swine, the swineherd's aghast face, and his dog's terror.

Said Roger of Salerno, "I pronounce that these were begotten of drugs. They stand outside the rational mind."

"Not these," said Thomas the Infirmarian, who as a servant of the Monastery should have asked his Abbot's leave to speak. "Not *these*—look!—in the bordure."

The border to the picture was a diaper of irregular but balanced compartments or cellules, where sat, swam, or weltered, devils in blank, so to say—things as yet uninspired by Evil—indifferent, but lawlessly outside imagination. Their shapes resembled, again, ladders, chains, scourges, diamonds, aborted buds, or gravid phosphorescent globes—some well-nigh star-like.

Roger of Salerno compared them to the obsessions of a Churchman's mind.

"Malignant?" the Friar from Oxford questioned.

"'Count everything unknown for horrible,'" Roger quoted with scorn.

"Not I. But they are marvellous—marvellous. I think——"

The Friar drew back. Thomas edged in to see better, and half opened his mouth.

"Speak," said Stephen, who had been

watching him. "We are all in a sort doctors here."

"I would say then"—Thomas rushed at it as one putting out his life's belief at the stake—"that these lower shapes in the bordure may not be so much hellish and malignant as models and patterns upon which John has tricked out and embellished his proper devils among the swine above there!"

"And that would signify?" said Roger of Salerno sharply.

"In my poor judgment, that he may have seen such shapes—without help of drugs."

"Now who—*who*"—said John of Burgos, after a round and unregarded oath—"has made thee so wise of a sudden, my Doubter?"

"I wise? God forbid! Only John, remember—one winter six years ago—the snowflakes melting on your sleeve at the cookhouse-door. You showed me them through a little crystal, that made small things larger."

"Yes. The Moors call such a glass the Eye of Allah," John confirmed.

"You showed me them melting—six-sided. You called them, then, your patterns."

"True. Snowflakes melt six-sided. I have used them for diaper-work often."

"Melting snowflakes as seen through a glass? By art optical?" the Friar asked.

"Art optical? *I* have never heard!" Roger of Salerno cried.

"John," said the Abbot of St. Illod's commandingly, "was it—is it so?"

"In some sort," John replied, "Thomas has the right of it. Those shapes in the bordure were my workshop-patterns for the devils above. In *my* craft, Salerno, we dare not drug. It kills hand and eye. My shapes are to be seen honestly, in nature."

Roger of Salerno was looking in silence—his nose nearer and nearer the page.

The Abbot drew a bowl of rose-water

towards him. " When I was prisoner with —with the Saracens after Mansura," he began, turning up the folds of his long sleeve, " there were certain magicians—physicians —who could show "—he dipped his third finger delicately in the water—" all the firmament of Hell, as it were, in "—he shook off one drop from his polished nail on to the polished table—" even such a supernaculum as this."

" But it must be foul water—not clean," said John.

" Show us then—all—all," said Stephen. " I would make sure—once more." The Abbot's voice was official.

JOHN drew from his bosom a stamped leather box, some six or eight inches long, wherein, bedded on faded velvet, lay what looked like silver-bound compasses of old box-wood, with a screw at the head which opened or closed the legs to minute fractions. The legs terminated, not in points, but spoon-shapedly, one spatula pierced with a metal-lined hole less than a quarter of an inch across, the other with a half-inch hole. Into this latter John, after carefully wiping with a silk rag, slipped a metal cylinder that carried glass or crystal, it seemed, at each end.

" Ah ! Art optic ! " said the Friar. " But what is that beneath it ? "

It was a small swivelling sheet of polished silver no bigger than a florin, which caught the light and concentrated it on the lesser hole. John adjusted it without the Friar's proffered help.

" And now to find a drop of water," said he, picking up a small brush.

" Come to my upper cloister. The sun is on the leads still," said the Abbot, rising.

They followed him there. Half way along, a drip from the gutter had made a greenish puddle in a worn stone. Very carefully John dropped a drop of it into the smaller hole of the compass-leg, and, steadying the apparatus on a coping, worked the screw in the compass-joint, screwed the cylinder, and swung the swivel of the mirror till he was satisfied.

" Good ! " He peered through the thing, " My Shapes are all here. Now look, Father ! If they do not meet your eye at first, turn this nicked edge here, left or right-handed."

" I have not forgotten," said the Abbot, taking his place. " Yes ! They are here— as they were in my time—my time past. There is no end to them, I was told. . . . There *is* no end ! "

" The light will go. Oh, let me look ! Suffer me to see, also ! " the Friar pleaded, almost shouldering Stephen from the eye-piece. The Abbot gave way. His eyes were on time past. But the Friar, instead of looking, turned the apparatus in his capable hands.

" Nay, nay," John interrupted, for the man was already fiddling at the screws. " Let the Doctor see."

Roger of Salerno looked, minute after minute. John saw his blue-veined cheek-bones turn white. He stepped back at last, as though stricken.

" It is a new world—a new world and— Oh, God Unjust !—I am old ! "

" And now Thomas," Stephen ordered.

John manipulated the tube for the Infirmarian, whose hands shook, and he, too, looked long. " It is Life," he said presently in a breaking voice. " No Hell ! Life created and rejoicing—the work of the Creator. They live, even as I have dreamed. Then it was no sin for me to dream. No sin— O God—no sin ! "

He flung himself on his knees and began hysterically the *Benedicite omnia Opera.*

" And now I will see how it is actuated," said the Friar from Oxford, thrusting forward again.

" Bring it within. The place is all eyes and ears," said Stephen.

They walked quietly back along the leads, three English counties laid out in evening sunshine around them ; church upon church, monastery upon monastery, cell after cell, and the bulk of a vast cathedral moored on the edge of the banked shoals of sunset.

When they were at the after-table once more they sat down, all except the Friar who went to the window and huddled bat-like over the thing. " I see ! I see ! " he was repeating to himself.

" He'll not hurt it," said John. But the Abbot, staring in front of him, like Roger of Salerno, did not hear. The Infirmarian's head was on the table between his shaking arms.

John reached for a cup of wine.

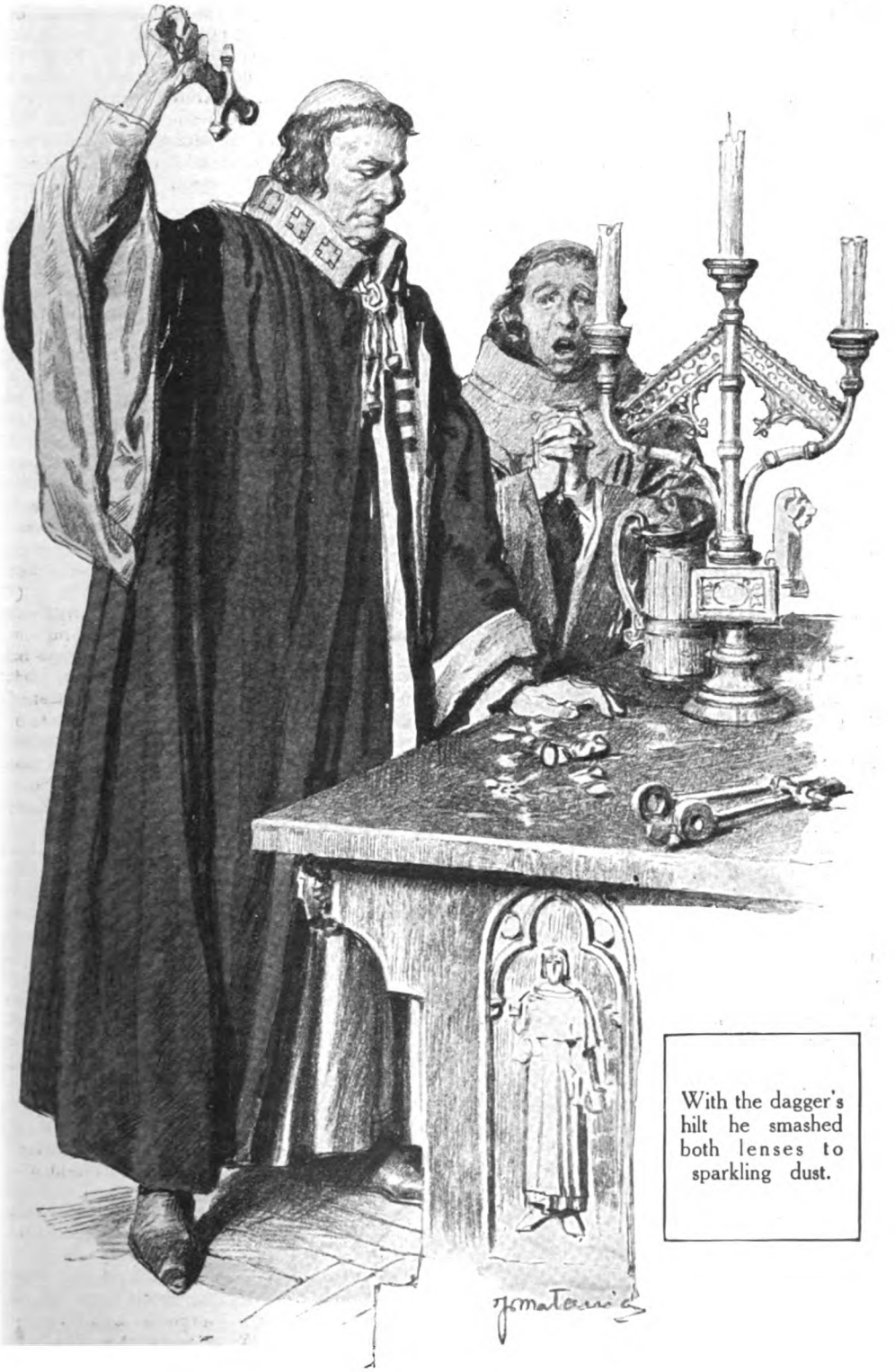
" It was shown to me," the Abbot was speaking to himself, " in Cairo, that man stands ever between two Infinities—of greatness and littleness. Therefore, there is no end—either to life—or——"

" And *I* stand on the edge of the grave," snarled Roger of Salerno. " Who pities *me ?* "

" Hush ! " said Thomas the Infirmarian. " The little creatures shall be sanctified— sanctified to the service of His sick."

" What need ? " John of Burgos wiped his lips. " It shows no more than the shapes of things. It gives good pictures. I had it at Granada. It was brought from the East, they told me."

Roger of Salerno laughed with an old man's malice. " What of Mother Church ? Most Holy Mother Church ? If it comes to



With the dagger's hilt he smashed both lenses to sparkling dust.

Her ears that we have spied into Her Hell without Her leave, where do we stand ? "

" At the stake," said the Abbot of St. Illod's, and, raising his voice a trifle, " You hear that ? Roger Bacon, heard you that ? "

The Friar turned from the window, clutching the compasses tighter.

" No, no ! " he appealed. " Not with Falcodi—not with our English-hearted Foulkes made Pope. He's wise—he's learned. He reads what I have put forth. Foulkes would never suffer it."

" ' Holy Pope is one thing, Holy Church another,' " Roger quoted.

" But I—*I* can bear witness it is no Art Magic," the Friar went on. " Nothing is it, except Art optical—wisdom after trial and experiment, mark you. I can prove it, and—my name weighs with men who dare think."

" Find them ! " croaked Roger of Salerno. " Five or six in all the world. That makes less than fifty pounds by weight of ashes at the stake. I have watched such men—reduced."

" I will not give this up ! " The Friar's voice cracked in passion and despair. " It would be to sin against the Light."

" No, no ! Let us—let us sanctify the little animals of Varro," said Thomas.

STEPHEN leaned forward, fished his ring out of the cup, and slipped it on his finger. " My sons," said he, " we have seen what we have seen."

" That it is no magic but simple Art," the Friar persisted.

" ' Avails nothing. In the eyes of Mother Church we have seen more than is permitted to man."

" But it was Life—created and rejoicing," said Thomas.

" To look into Hell as we shall be judged—as we shall be proved—to have looked, is for priests only."

" Or green-sick virgins on the road to sainthood who, for cause any mid-wife could give you——"

The Abbot's half-lifted hand checked Roger of Salerno's outpouring.

" Nor may even priests see more in Hell than Church knows to be there. John, there is respect due to Church as well as to Devils."

" My trade's the outside of things," said John quietly. " I have my patterns."

" But you may need to look again for more," the Friar said.

" In my craft, a thing done is done with. We go on to new shapes after that."

" And if we trespass beyond bounds, even in thought, we lie open to the judgment of the Church," the Abbot continued.

" But thou knowest—*knowest !* " Roger of Salerno had returned to the attack. " Here's all the world in darkness concerning the causes of things—from the fever across the lane to thy Lady's—thine own Lady's—eating malady. Think ! "

" I have thought upon it, Salerno ! I have thought indeed."

Thomas the Infirmarian lifted his head again ; and this time he did not stammer at all. " As in the water, so in the blood must they rage and war with each other ! I have dreamed these ten years—I thought it was a sin—but my dreams and Varro's are true ! Think on it again ! Here's the Light under our very hand ! "

" Quench it ! You'd no more stand to roasting than—any other. I'll give you the case as Church—as I myself—would frame it. Our John here returns from the Moors, and shows us a hell of devils contending in the compass of one drop of water. Magic past clearance ! You can hear the faggots crackle."

" But thou knowest ! Thou hast seen it all before ! For man's poor sake ! For old friendship's sake—Stephen ! " The Friar was trying to stuff the compasses into his bosom as he appealed.

" What Stephen de Sautré knows, you his friends know also. I would have you, now, obey the Abbot of St. Illod's. Give to me ! " He held out his ringed hand.

" May I—may John here—not even make a drawing of one—one screw ? " said the broken Friar, in spite of himself.

" Nowise ! " Stephen took it over. " Your dagger, John. Sheathed will serve."

He unscrewed the metal cylinder, laid it on the table, and with the dagger's hilt smashed both lenses to sparkling dust which he swept into a scooped hand and cast behind the hearth.

" It would seem," said he, " the choice lies between two sins. To deny the world a Light which is under our hand, or to enlighten the world before her time. What you have seen, I saw long since among the physicians at Cairo. And I know what doctrine they drew from it. Hast *thou* dreamed, Thomas ? I also—with fuller knowledge. But this birth, my sons, is untimely. It will be but the mother of more death, more torture, more division, and greater darkness in this dark age. Therefore I, who know both my world and the Church, take this Choice on my conscience. Go ! It is finished."

He thrust the wooden part of the compasses deep among the beech logs till all was burned.

Cynthia Delmorton's Mistake

By "SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)

ILLUSTRATED BY NORMAN SUTCLIFFE

CYNTHIA DELMORTON was a singularly beautiful girl, and for all I know is so still. Her figure was perfect: her face almost flawless. There were critics who said that her nose was a trifle too long; there were others, on the contrary, who denied the fact with oaths and curses. But seeing that she had been painted by three of London's leading artists, who one and all declared that she was the most perfect thing they had ever seen, the nose question cannot have been very serious.

Her origin was a little obscure. She lived in a charming house in South Audley Street with an elderly lady who rejoiced in the name of Aunt Hester. Moreover, she undoubtedly had money—lots of it. There was a rumour that the late Mr. Delmorton had really been Smithson and Co., Ltd.—one of those charitable firms whose aim in life is to ease other people's financial troubles by lending them money on note of hand alone. And if such a base rumour over the lovely Cynthia could possibly be true, she had certainly possessed the most notorious blood-sucker in London as her father—a man without a tinge of mercy or a thought of compassion.

The fact, however, remained that she was extremely wealthy. Which was a far more important matter than the method by which the money had been obtained. And the result had been that divers men of all ages and positions had laid their hands and hearts at her disposal. Some of them had been genuinely infatuated by her beauty: others by her bank balance. But one and all of them, when their offer was turned down, thanked almighty Heaven for their escape. Except one poor boob, who blew out his brains. For the beautiful Cynthia had one very unpleasant trait, which never manifested itself until the last moment. She would lead a man on until he was well-nigh crazy—and then laugh in his face.

Of course, when the man she did decide to marry appeared, there would be no laughter. At least, if there was it would be carefully concealed. But so far that lucky being had not arrived. And when he did he would have to be something pretty special. Cynthia Delmorton was essentially not one of those who—to paraphrase the well-known line—had danced with Princes and kept the common touch. Nothing under an Earl would be good enough for her final choice—and not a modern creation at that. But until that blissful day arrived she saw no reason why good-looking men should not go wild about her and throng her charming drawing-room.

And then one spring that complete disrespecter of persons—influenza—descended upon the house. Within an hour so did Sir William Harbottle, London's most fashionable and futile doctor. He consumed a glass of port and ate a biscuit, and with deadly accuracy diagnosed the disease. He continued to descend at ten guineas a time, more port and more biscuits, and finally pronounced his lovely patient convalescent.

"But, my dear young lady," he announced as he stroked her arm, "we require setting up. We are a little run down."

The "we," needless to state, was a pleasing conceit of Sir William's; no one regarding his ample presence need have panicked unduly.

"We will take a sea voyage."

"Dear Sir William," she murmured. "A sea voyage?"

"Where the bracing ozone will set us up again. Restore our wasted tissues; remove our lassitude. And then we shall return fresh and invigorated for the ardours of June in London."

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And the more she thought of the idea the more she liked it.

Aunt Hester proved the first obstacle. For that usually malleable woman, having heard of Cynthia's decision, stuck in her toes and jibbed definitely. Nothing would induce her to go on the sea. She loathed it and detested it; she was always seasick—and, in short, rather than do so she would resign her position as Cynthia's companion.

"If you must have someone with you, my dear," she said, "why not ask Marjorie? She's a nice girl; she won't get in your way, and you'll be doing her a real kindness as well."

Cynthia cogitated. Yes: Marjorie Blackton would do. Better perhaps than Aunt Hester. Her idea of a companion was what most people would describe as an unpaid maid, and if her aunt was continually seasick she would be more nuisance than she was worth.

"Write and ask her," she said thoughtfully. "Tell her that as far as clothes are concerned, she can send any reasonable bill in to me."

Marjorie Blackton was an old school friend of hers. At least she was the only girl at the very expensive place at which Cynthia had been "finished" whom she did not actually dislike. For even at that age she neither loved nor was loved by her own sex. And for some strange reason Marjorie bestowed on her one of those peculiar adorations which arise and flourish in girls' schools.

Strange, because it would have been impossible to find two more totally dissimilar characters. Marjorie was everything that her idol was not. Unselfish, utterly lovable, frank and open, she was the exact antithesis of Cynthia. And the latter, though slightly flattered for a time, soon took advantage of the state of affairs. She practically made the younger girl her fag. It was "Marjorie, do this," and "Marjorie, fetch that," from the beginning of term till the end. And the same relationship had continued after they left school, though necessarily not to the same extent.

Then quite suddenly Mr. Blackton lost most of his money, and for a while Cynthia had debated whether to ask Marjorie to come as her companion. As far as she was capable of affection for anybody she was fond of her, but having given the matter due consideration she had come to the conclusion that an older woman would be more suitable from every point of view. And so she dismissed Marjorie from her scheme of things, as was her custom when a person was no longer of use to her. Now she proposed to bring her back temporarily into that scheme; a proposal which met with the other girl's delighted approval as soon as she heard of it.

AND so, some three weeks later, the two of them stepped into the boat train at Waterloo, bound for Southampton. The most luxurious cabin in the s.s. *Orio-lan*, twelve thousand tons, of the Union Steamship line, had been engaged; a number of immaculately-clothed young men, who had pleaded in vain to be allowed to accompany them as far as the ship, clustered round the carriage door.

"Now you must all promise to be good whilst I am away," said Cynthia impartially. "And when I come back in June——"

It was at that moment that the train began to move, but she managed that every member of the group should think that her unfinished sentence was addressed to him personally.

"Thank God that's over, my dear," she said, languidly. "What a bore they are! Do give me my rug, will you?"

She looked up with a sudden frown: a man was standing in the door leading into the corridor. Moreover, he seemed to be on the point of depositing a weather-beaten suit-case on one of the spare seats.

"This carriage is engaged," she remarked, haughtily.

The man turned round with a smile.

"Am I to understand," he said, "that you are the proud possessor of six tickets? I'm really very sorry, but this is the only compartment in the train that isn't full."

"I gave orders that I required a carriage to myself," she said, with her most freezing look.

"Dear me!" he answered, politely. "If it wasn't for the fact that you can't give orders for anything of the sort, I should say that someone had blundered. However, what would you like me to do? Stand in the corridor, or go into the guard's van?"

"If you persist in intruding," she said, icily, "I would prefer that you do so in silence."

"Why—sure," he remarked, genially. "Doubtless we shall have lots of time for conversation before we get to the Cape."

He buried himself behind a newspaper, leaving Cynthia gasping. The Cape? Was this odious mortal going to the Cape with her? True he was young and of pleasing appearance, but he must clearly be put in his place and punished. And she was an adept at doing both.

It was at that moment that she got her second shock. Marjorie was undoubtedly smiling at the man behind her magazine: the man was grinning at Marjorie behind his

"This carriage is engaged," she remarked, haughtily.

paper. She knew it; she had done it so often herself with other men.

But what she could do was one thing: what Marjorie could do was quite another. For her companion and a strange man to indulge in mutual smiles at her expense was a state of affairs not to be tolerated for an instant. And the small fact that she was completely wrong—that all that had happened was that Marjorie, suddenly seeing him grinning at her, had involuntarily smiled back just because it was good to be alive—cut no ice. She wouldn't have believed it, anyhow; but then Cynthia Delmorton's joy in living lay, not in just life, but merely in what she could get out of it.

They were running through Eastleigh when the man spoke again. Five times during the journey had Marjorie got up to do something for Cynthia—and three out of the five times she could far more easily have done it for herself. And five times during the journey had an amused and faintly contemptuous glint come into the man's eyes. But he remained buried behind his paper until the train began to slacken, when he folded it up.

"Would you care to sit at my table?" he asked, gravely. "I'm the second officer, and I generally manage to collect a cheery bunch."

For a moment Cynthia stared at him speechlessly; the second officer.

"Surprised at my not being on board, I suppose?" he went on, cheerfully. "Pretty exceptional, I agree. But the old man is a sportsman, and my business was sudden and urgent. However, would you like me to fix it up about the table?"

"I think it would be very nice," said Cynthia, quietly, and Marjorie glanced at her in some trepidation. She knew that tone of old—knew what it portended. She knew that before the end of the voyage this poor young man was going to wish he had never been born. And it was a shame.

But she couldn't warn him, and he rushed into the trap.

"Splendid. I'll arrange it. But I warn you from what I hear we're going to have it a bit choppy as far as Madeira."

They did: and Marjorie, for the first time, began to see Cynthia in her true light. She was loyal clean through; she tried to make excuses—but the plain fact emerged that for selfishness her employer was in a class by herself. True, she was ill—slightly—for a couple of days; but until they anchored off Funchal Cynthia treated her and the stewardess like a couple of slaves. Then she was graciously pleased to emerge from her cabin, and show herself for the first time to the admiring gaze of her fellow-passengers.

"Well, well, how are you?"

A cheerful voice hailed the lovely invalid, and she looked up from her deck chair to see their travelling companion. He looked different in uniform; in fact, honesty compelled her to admit that he looked extremely nice in uniform. So she gave him one of her most bewitching smiles, and confessed that she felt a little better.

"Good," he cried. "We shall be dancing to-night, and you must play a bit of deck tennis. Miss Blackton is a nailer at it."

"MY dear, that is Cynthia Delmorton. You must have seen her pictures in the *Tatler* and *Sketch*."

The words carried to her during a sudden lull in the raucous babel around her, and a sense of pleasant well-being stole over her. Yes; she was Cynthia Delmorton. And the sun was shining, and the water was blue, and the brown-skinned boys diving off the deck for threepenny-bits thrown into the water amused her. Also there was an extremely bumptious and conceited young man to punish. She smiled slightly to herself. Fancy wasting her time on an officer in the Merchant Service! Still, she would do it quickly, and then turn to worthier game.

"Mr. Fraser," she called gently as he passed—Marjorie had found out his name—"won't you come and cheer me up? Besides, I want to apologize. I'm afraid I was rather rude to you in the train."

"Rude!" he laughed. "Not a bit. You were just natural. Sorry I can't stop now, but I've got to see a man about a dog in the smoking-room. You shall apologize at lunch. You're sitting next to me."

And with that he was gone, leaving Cynthia Delmorton utterly speechless. Never in the course of her life had any man spoken to her like that before. "See a man about a dog in the smoking-room." When she had invited him to sit by her. "Not rude; only natural." Was the man mad?

He certainly showed no signs of insanity at lunch. He included her breezily in the conversation; chaffed Marjorie Blackton, who had been ashore and done the time-honoured toboggan trip over the cobbles from Terreiro da Lucta, and finally challenged her to a game of deck quoits later on.

"When you're a little stronger," he remarked, "you must play tennis."

And there was a twinkle in his eyes as he spoke, the sort of twinkle a parent might have when dealing with a fractious child.

And so it went on. The trouble about the man was that he seemed impervious to snubs. He had a hide like a rhinoceros: delicate satire flew off him like water off a duck's back. Of course, he missed the point of it all—that was the reason. Completely

lacking in breeding, he was unable to understand her subtle irony.

And Marjorie, who understood it only too well, felt her heart grow sick within her. At last her final delusions about Cynthia were gone. Coming out to Madeira they had begun to totter: by the time they were crossing the line the crash was complete. Thank Heaven! Jim Fraser didn't appreciate the position of affairs: that was her only compensation.

AND then one evening something occurred which brought her up with a start. She was sitting out by herself in a quiet corner of the promenade deck, when two people passed her. They didn't see her, but she recognized them at once. They paused in an angle of the deck not three yards away from her, and she heard Cynthia's voice.

" You really are the most attractive man, Jim."

Marjorie could have screamed. It was too cruel. Surely, surely she needn't carry her vindictiveness to such a point as that. The poor devil had done her no harm; she cared not the snap of a finger about him. But just to gratify her petty spite, she was going to lead him on—and then shake with laughter in his face. Marjorie half rose; then, with a little gasp that was half a sob, she crouched back again. For Cynthia was in his arms.

With a sick numbness she watched him kiss her; heard Cynthia's low triumphant laugh; heard her whispered " Darling."

Then she was gone, leaving him standing in the shadow. For a second she paused at the top of the companion, and her words floated back: " There is always to-morrow."

For a while he stood there; then suddenly, with a little start, he saw Marjorie. He came over to her slowly, and sat down beside her.

" You saw," he said, quietly. " I'm sorry."

" So am I," she answered, gravely. " Very sorry. Oh, Mr. Fraser," she went on, impulsively, " don't think me impertinent and foolish. But I—oh! it's so difficult to say."

He was staring at her steadily, and she went stumbling on bravely.

" You see—I know Cynthia. And I don't want to be disloyal to her—after all, she's paying everything for me. But please, please be careful. She's—she's different to most girls. She's been spoilt, I suppose—and she doesn't mean to be cruel."

" No," he agreed, quietly. " It's just natural."

But she hardly heard.

" She just plays with men. And then she turns them down without a thought. Can't you see—oh! can't you see? I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you must realize that she has the world at her feet, and—and——"

" And therefore is hardly likely to pay serious attention to the second officer of the good ship *Ortolan*," he said, lighting a cigarette.

She looked at him surprised; he seemed singularly calm about it.

" That's why I am so sorry you saw," he concluded.

" But I don't want you to be hurt," she cried. " And you will be."

" Why don't you want me to be hurt? " he said, gently.

" Oh! because—— Of course I don't. I hate to see anybody hurt."

" You dear! You dear girl! " And now she was staring at him in genuine amazement, and dimly realizing that both her hands were in his. " I'm only sorry you saw it, Marjorie, because I can't now do what I would like to. At least, not at this moment."

And then he, too, was gone, and after a while Marjorie got up a little stiffly and went below. What on earth had he meant?

" MY dear," said Cynthia, " too humorous! Our worthy pachyderm has kissed me."

" I saw you," she answered, dully. " Oh, Cynthia—can't you leave him alone? "

" What on earth do you mean? " cried the other. And then she suddenly burst into a peal of laughter. " Why, I believe you're in love with him yourself."

" I am," said Marjorie, gravely, and started to undress.

Of course, this was too much of a scream altogether: it really added relish to the jest. That Marjorie—demure little Marjorie—should have fallen in love with the second officer was too exquisite.

" My dear," she cried, " but this is Romance with a capital R. Does he reciprocate your feelings? "

" Of course he doesn't," answered the other, flushing. " And, Cynthia—you won't say anything, will you? "

" My dear—trust me. Perish the thought that I should spoil love's young dream. But I must insist on being allowed to deal with the dear man just once. I'll let him down mildly, I promise you, but he has been exceedingly rude to me—and he's got to take his gruel like a good boy."

" But I'm sure he didn't mean it, Cynthia," said Marjorie, miserably.

" Then he's got to learn. And, anyway, my dear," she went on, with a smile, " you have the remedy in your own hands. Get

him to take *you* up on deck to-morrow night."

"You know I don't stand a chance if you're about," said Marjorie, simply. "Anyway, I'm nothing to him. But I don't think you're playing the game. He's—he's not the type of man. It's not fair to a man like him, Cynthia: it's not fair."

"Then he had better not go and see people about dogs, my dear, when I've asked him to come and talk to me," said the other, softly. "I don't like men who do that. Besides, he must be trained—if you're going to marry him."

She got into her bunk and opened a book, and with a little shiver, though the night was tropical, Marjorie followed her example. And when at last she did fall asleep, she got no rest. For she dreamed without cessation—dreams in which she saw Cynthia, gloating and devilish, and a white-faced sobbing man—a man she tried to comfort, but who always turned away from her.

IT was the day after that a piece of information arrived in the Wireless Bulletin, which for nearly six hours annoyed Cynthia thoroughly. Marjorie saw it first, just as she was going in to breakfast, and thought no more about it. The news that the Earl of Axminster had been killed in a motor accident interested her but little more than the fact that the French exchange was 169.47. It was otherwise with Cynthia. Not

With a sick numbness she watched him kiss her; heard Cynthia's

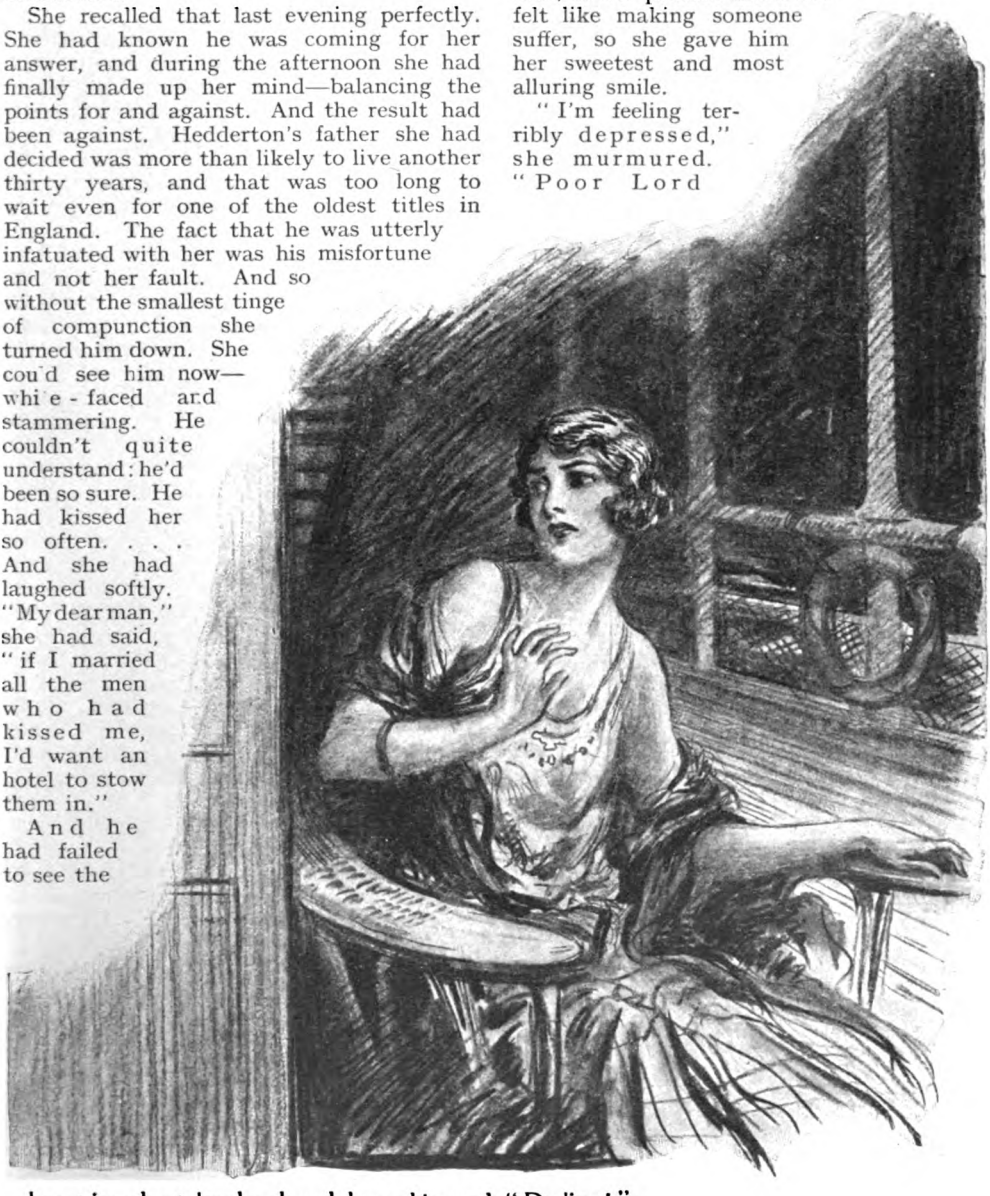
that the death of that well-known and sporting nobleman at the early age of fifty-six distressed her in the slightest, but merely because it made her wish that she had acted otherwise. And it is annoying when one cannot rectify a mistake. She might now have been the Countess of Axminster. And she wasn't. Which was a distressing thought—most distressing. Had not Hedderton—his eldest son—sat in her pocket for a complete season? In fact, she had almost—but not quite—become Viscountess Hedderton.

She recalled that last evening perfectly. She had known he was coming for her answer, and during the afternoon she had finally made up her mind—balancing the points for and against. And the result had been against. Hedderton's father she had decided was more than likely to live another thirty years, and that was too long to wait even for one of the oldest titles in England. The fact that he was utterly infatuated with her was his misfortune and not her fault. And so without the smallest tinge of compunction she turned him down. She could see him now—white-faced and stammering. He couldn't quite understand: he'd been so sure. He had kissed her so often. . . . And she had laughed softly. "My dear man," she had said, "if I married all the men who had kissed me, I'd want an hotel to stow them in."

And he had failed to see the cheapness of the remark, because, poor devil, he was still infatuated. Instead, he had gone off to Africa and died. Not four months previously. Most annoying. In fact, when she went in to lunch she was feeling thoroughly irritable.

JIM FRASER was already there, and he bowed to her gravely. He was looking strained about the eyes, she noticed; all through lunch he hardly spoke. Hooked already; hardly worth powder and shot. Still, in her present mood she felt like making someone suffer, so she gave him her sweetest and most alluring smile.

"I'm feeling terribly depressed," she murmured. "Poor Lord



low triumphant laugh; heard her whispered "Darling!"

Axminster is dead. Such a charming man."

A woman opposite looked at her with interest.

"Of course, you knew him well, Miss Delmorton?"

"Naturally," remarked Cynthia, languidly. "You see, Hedderton and I were very great friends."

Marjorie squirmed, and when Jim Fraser leaned forward with a puzzled frown she could have screamed. She guessed what was coming.

"Hedderton," he said. "I don't quite follow."

"Viscount Hedderton," she explained, politely. "Axminster's son. They have different names, you know."

"I see," he answered. "I suppose that is done to make it harder."

She smiled, and glanced round the table. "What funny ideas you have, Mr. Fraser! Yes—Hedderton died in Africa."

"And who is the heir?" asked someone.

"I really don't know," she answered. "He had no brothers. There was a cousin of sorts, I believe."

She relapsed suddenly into silence; what was it Hedderton had said on that point? It was a cousin—a very charming fellow, but a rolling stone. Unmarried. Of course, he might be impossible, but it was worth while bearing in mind against her return to London. She would write Aunt Hester a letter from Cape Town telling her to make inquiries. It would be funny if, after all, she did pull it off. The thought of it put her in quite a good temper again.

"Don't forget you promised to show me the Southern Cross to-night, Mr. Fraser," she said, as he rose from his seat.

"Am I likely to?" he answered, fervently.

And across the table her eyes met Marjorie's mockingly. Really life wasn't so bad, after all; it had its humorous side.

But it was a side that was taxed to the uttermost that evening. The pachyderm was so terribly intense and gauche. And he would persist in harking back to Lord Axminster's death.

"It must be wonderful," he said, humbly, "to know all those people, who are just names to us, as intimately as you do."

He was holding her hand at the time, and gazing at her adoringly.

"I very nearly married Hedderton," she said, softly. "But I'm glad I didn't—now."

"And if you had," he puzzled it out, "you would be the—the Earless of Axminster."

She gave a delighted gurgle of laughter.

"Countess," she corrected him. "But then, you see—the poor fellow is dead."

"But I'm sure he wouldn't have gone to Africa if you had married him," he said, gravely.

"Well, if he hadn't and was alive, and I had married him—then I should be the Earless of Axminster. You delicious person."

"And instead of that," he cried, eagerly, "you're going to be——"

Really, she'd die of suppressed laughter in a second. The pachyderm was on the verge of proposing; she looked round to see if, by any chance, Marjorie was about. This was going to be a thing too good to be missed.

"What am I going to be?" she whispered.

"Cynthia—wouldn't you rather be my wife than the Countess of Axminster?"

That finished it; self-control could stand it no longer. She burst into a peal of laughter; then she pulled herself together. The thing had become a bore; so she'd punish the pachyderm now and finish with it.

"This," she said, as soon as she had recovered herself sufficiently to speak, "is the funniest thing that has ever occurred to me. My poor, dear young man, are you mad? Do you really imagine, even for one second, that I should marry you?" Laughter again overcame her.

"But you deserved a little lesson, you know. As a matter of fact, I intended to give you a longer one, but I couldn't help laughing. You were so supremely ridiculous."

Once more she began to shake.

"No, Mr. Fraser, I am afraid that I must decline the riotous future you offer me. I feel it would be too much for my nerves. But as a reward for having made me laugh, I'll tell you a secret. Put the excellent alternative you gave me before Marjorie. Not that the poor dear is ever likely to be Countess of anything, but still——"

She rose with a smile—a smile which suddenly faded from her face. For this uncouth boor was lying back in his deck chair, literally holding his sides.

"Rich," he almost sobbed. "Not to say ripe and fruity. You're quite right, my dear woman; we've hurried matters. This jest would have stood another three days."

"What on earth do you mean?" she said.

And then he, too, rose to his feet, and stood facing her.

"Listen to me, Cynthia Delmorton," he said, quietly. "In the course of my wanderings round the globe I've met some pretty rotten women. You're just about the rottenest."

"How dare you?"

In her stunned rage she could hardly get the words out.

"You're going to hear one or two home truths now," he went on, calmly. "You're a calculating, mercenary snob—and you

" What on earth has happened to Cynthia? " she cried.

killed Hedderton as surely as if you'd shot him yourself. Only no jury, unfortunately, could convict you. I happened to see him the night before he left for Africa, poor devil."

" Will you kindly take me straight to the

captain ? " she said, icily. " I can only conclude that you're drunk, and I wish to make a complaint."

" Certainly," he answered. " What are you going to tell him ? That I was drunk last night, too—when I kissed you ? "

For a moment or two she stared at him, white and rigid with rage. He had got her, and she knew it : this common man had beaten her at her own game. Why he had done it was beyond her : her brain was still too dazed at the sudden turning of the tables to think clearly.

" You set out to teach me a lesson." He was speaking again. " I fully intended that you should. Your only miscalculation was that I had already determined to teach you one—one that you richly deserved. But I admit that I never even dreamed that the lesson would prove quite so subtly successful until this morning. And I'm profoundly sorry it has. I was very fond of my uncle."

" Your uncle ? " she stammered. " What do you mean ? "

" There was a cousin of sorts, I believe," he said, gravely. " There was, and—is. And he happens to be second officer of the *Ortolan*."

" You mean," she almost screamed, " that you're Lord Axminster ? "

" Precisely," he answered. " And since you have mercifully refused my invitation to become my Earless, I think we might conclude the interview. You see, I want to follow your advice, and put the alternative I gave you in front of Marjorie. Er—good night. Oh ! and the captain's cabin is the fourth from this end. It's the big one. And incidentally—one other small point. Had I not been perfectly certain that you didn't know who I was, I should never have risked proposing. The danger of your acceptance would have been too great. Still, it was kind of you to explain about us having different names."

A moment later he was alone : Cynthia Delmorton still retained sufficient thinking capacity to realize that, if she was going to have hysterics, her cabin was the most suitable place. For a while he stood looking after her : then half-consciously he turned and stared over the water towards Africa.

" Yes, old man," he muttered, " she killed you. And I loved you. Life's a funny thing."

THEN, with a faint smile on his lips, he strolled down to the main deck. They were dancing, and he stood in the smoking-room door watching. Life indeed was a funny thing. And then he saw her, coming towards him with a startled look on her face.

" What on earth has happened to Cynthia ? " she cried. " She's in the most extraordinary condition."

" Biting the bed - clothes ? " he said, lazily. " Splendid. I asked her a question, you see, and she got the answer wrong. I asked her if she would sooner be my wife or Countess of Axminster."

" Jim—you proposed ? But I don't understand. Did she refuse you ? "

" Good God, my dear," he cried, " you don't suppose I'd be as pleased as I am if she'd accepted me. And now I want to ask you the same question."

And then suddenly he grew serious.

" Marjorie—Marjorie, darling, come up on the boat deck. I don't make a hobby of this, my dear—and there's a lot you don't understand. But I haven't got time to explain it to you now, not until you've answered that question. Will you marry me ? "

" Jim—you're mad," she whispered. " And you can't propose in the smoking-room."

" Can't I ? I've just done it. But come up above and I'll do it again."

And she went. And she stayed. And an hour later he still hadn't explained ; explanations are tedious things. In fact, it wasn't until the following morning that she thought about the explanation, and then for a while she couldn't grasp it.

For Jim wasn't at breakfast, and a note lay in her plate. She tore open the envelope, and read the contents.

" *Second Officer Jim Fraser presents his compliments to the future Countess of Axminster, and trusts that the beautiful Miss Delmorton is not still biting the bed-clothes. He further solicits her company at the eleven o'clock issue of beef tea.*

" *P.S.—You're an adorable darling.—Jim.*"

NEXT MONTH:

A New SHERLOCK HOLMES *Story*

By A. CONAN DOYLE.

Master

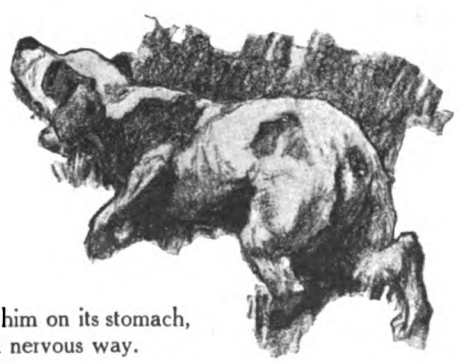
By

G.R.MALLOCH

Illustrated by
REGINALD CLEAVER

These houses were exactly the same in appearance as his own, and on either hand the road curved without visible end, lined with houses of exactly the same pattern. There was no neater or more polished-looking house in the road than John's, none with cleaner windows or better curtains. So John was thinking on this April evening and wondering why he was not satisfied.

There was a bright cloud in the sky that looked like a horse with a mane of fire. It reminded him of books he used to read when he was a boy. All sorts of adventurous ideas he used to have. Silly stuff. There were many worse off than himself. Yet it was a bit dull. That was what life was like. He had an excellent wife. Funny



It squirmed towards him on its stomach, looking up in a nervous way.

JOHN BROWN, a clerk, forty years of age, a thin, indefinite-looking person, beginning to go bald, beginning to stoop, beginning to be a little careless about shaving and about his dress, was standing in the front garden of his house, Number 345, Numbers Road. He was smoking a dirty old pipe and looking at the sky, which was bright with the dying sunset behind the houses on the other side of the road. how that cloud resembled a horse with a fiery mane. Spring was always an unsettling time. How he hated his wife's relations. No, no, that wouldn't do: but they got on one's nerves. Funny, that cloud, like a horse waiting for a rider: a wild horse, waiting for someone to master it. Life was like a horse. One or two learned to ride it and made it take them where they pleased. The others were clerks like himself.

A spot of light appeared at the end of the road, a quarter of a mile away. It was the lamplighter beginning his round.

While John stood watching, as he had often done, for the next light to appear, he heard a slight rustle under the privet bushes that grew against his fence. A rat, he thought at first. But in the shadow of the fence something bigger than a rat was moving. He bent down and peered under the bushes. It must be a dog: yes, a little dog, wagging its tail uneasily, apologetically.

John snapped his fingers. "Come here!" he said softly, for he did not want his wife to hear. Very slowly and timidly it came here, a strange little mongrel thing, half fox-terrier, half anything. It squirmed towards him on its stomach till it lay at his feet. It lay with its head on its paws, looking up at him in a nervous way, humble, awaiting what fate he should decree. It had been driven out of many front gardens before it found refuge in John's.

He felt sorry for the starved-looking dog. "Get up!" he said, cracking his fingers. The dog got up, and began wagging its tail and trying to lick his hands. He felt for a collar. There was none: a stray, of course. And a bitch, of course!

"Lie down!" said John, and instantly the mongrel lay down at his feet, resting its head on its front paws and looking up at him timidly, trustfully. Such immediate obedience pleased John: it was something entirely novel for him to give an order and have it obeyed without question. It pleased him so much that he repeated the orders again and again: "Get up!" "Lie down!" like a sergeant drilling recruits. Every time the dog obeyed and every time a more trusting look shone in its eyes. It seemed to say imploringly, "Be my master! Be my master, oh wonderful, strong man, and I will love and obey you all my life."

John was standing a little straighter, the stoop of his shoulders was not quite so pronounced. From earliest childhood it had been his lot to obey orders, he reflected, orders from parents, teachers, employers, superiors in the office where he worked, and at home from his wife. Even to shopkeepers he did not give orders: he asked them to send him things or to sell him things in a sort of shamefaced way, as if they might refuse him. Nobody came forward bowing politely when he entered a shop: his orders were taken casually. He had often noticed that, and he concluded that something was lacking in his manner or appearance. He was only a clerk, after all, and could not expect anything else. Now, there at his feet was a creature that trembled at his lightest word, that seemed to adore him, that obeyed him without hesitation, that seemed to be saying that its sole object in life was to obey his commands and be his faithful servant. It was a new, a strangely thrilling experience. A stray dog—why should he not keep it? What would Elizabeth say, though? She had always refused to have an animal about the house, even a cat. Messy things, she called them. Probably she would refuse now.

The bitch began to lick his boots. She looked up at him timidly, saying with her eyes: "Oh, master, I will obey you!" "Lie down!" said John, and instantly she lay down, very still, with those watchful, worshipping eyes on his face.

Hungry, poor thing, thought John. Softly cracking his fingers for her to follow, he went through the side gate and opened the coal-cellar door: after a moment of hesitation, the dog went in. He closed the door and fetched some biscuits and milk from the kitchen. He watched these being ravenously devoured, patted the dirty coat kindly, spread a sack for her to lie on, and went into the house. He had to tell his wife. He wanted to keep the dog: he was sorry for it, he loved it, he loved being obeyed. But what would Elizabeth say?

ELIZABETH had never heard of such nonsense. She would not have any animal about the place, that was certain. Rubbish—what did he want with a dog? A female dog, too? Was he mad? And much more in the same strain Elizabeth said, while John listened silently at his supper. A horrid thought was forming itself in his mind, a strangely fascinating thought. He had given orders to a dog and had been obeyed instantly. Why did people obey orders from other people? Because they were given; just because they were given, perhaps? He had never given an order either in business or at home. As he munched his cold ham he asked himself, why? Why did he obey orders? Simply because it was a sort of automatic result of an order given. Some men had guessed that and went through life giving orders and being obeyed by people who never stopped to ask themselves why they obeyed. He had been one of those obeyers, even here, at home, in his own house, of which he ought to be master.

When Elizabeth had tired herself on the subject, he spoke.

"Elizabeth, I am going to keep that dog." He scarcely recognized his own voice. It sounded rather too loud, but, nevertheless, the words made him feel more of a man.

"Not in my house," said Elizabeth. For a moment John hesitated. How often he had given way, so often that it had become a

"How dare you speak to me like that?" she demanded.

habit; given way for the sake of peace and comfort. He might have given way again but for a sudden perception that here was Elizabeth giving orders and he obeying them automatically. Why should he obey? Before he could think it out any further, he heard his own voice saying very firmly:—

"It is in my house that I propose to keep the dog."

Elizabeth's mouth fell open: she stared at him in astonishment, holding a cup of cocoa half-way to her mouth. He noticed the effect of his words and went on.

"I have noticed, my dear, that you have fallen into a habit of giving what are practically commands to me. This is my house and I am the master of it. When I give orders here I expect them to be obeyed. I have decided that the dog is to be kept."

Elizabeth went paler than usual.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" she demanded. "Have you been drinking?"

"No," said John. "I have been thinking."

"Well, you can choose between me and your precious dog. If it stays here, I don't. I shall go to mother's."

"Very well," said John, dimly conscious that something of immense importance was at stake. "The dog stays here. If you choose to be ridiculous, go home to your mother."

No further conversation passed between them that night.

NEXT morning John was up early. He took the dog into the back garden, fed it, and found that it knew how to fetch things thrown by its master and bring them to his feet. It was an ugly little creature by daylight, dirty white with brown patches. But it was very intelligent and obviously delighted to have found a kind master. He amused himself by giving it orders and having them obeyed. Mingled with his growing affection for the creature whose worship of himself was so obvious and whose chief idea of bliss seemed to be licking its master's hands, was a growing feeling of self-respect. If this animal knew what a poor, abject sort of creature he had allowed himself to become, perhaps it would not be so enthusiastic, he reflected; but something told him that he was not really like that. He had fallen into slack, easy ways of acquiescence, but there was still time to change all that. No more pottering for him.

Elizabeth was very quiet and dignified at breakfast. The dog was not mentioned, very little was said about anything. John found himself looking critically at his wife. It was a new experience and bracing mentally. Yes, he liked her, of course, and she had ever so many virtues. But she had become just a trifle too much accustomed to having her own way. In fact, she gave orders: his fault, of course, for allowing it. Women who have no children, he reflected, ought to have outside interests; otherwise they concentrate upon their husbands, who get not only wifely affection but the full force of a diverted maternal instinct. And in the end, unless they kick in time, the husbands become mere children without will or soul or liberty of their own. John marvelled at himself. Why should all this become so clear to him suddenly because a stray bitch had licked his hand?

It was Saturday, and John had a free afternoon before him. He would make a kennel for the dog, he thought.

"I'll be back as early as I can," he said on rising from the table.

"Oh, indeed!" said Elizabeth.

"Yes. I'm going to make a kennel for Beauty—that's what I'm going to call her—because she's so ugly."

But Elizabeth refused to smile. "Oh, indeed!" was all she said. And as John was putting his coat on, she came into the hall and said: "John, when I said that we could not keep this dog, I meant it. I will not have an animal about the house."

And John, as he opened the door, said: "Elizabeth, once and for all, I am going to keep that dog. Let me hear no more about it."

"We shall see," said Elizabeth. John pondered over that saying, with the result that he went to the police-station and had a chat with the inspector, before catching a train to the City. And on his way to the office he called at a post-office and took out a dog licence.

As he hung up his coat and hat on the familiar peg, how loathsome the office looked! Dirty, ill-arranged, no discipline, no system, except the little reforms he had managed to introduce from time to time after a battle with Thomson, the head clerk.

Thomson lounged up to him as usual and began his idiotic talk about football and horses. John looked at him critically. Why should this slovenly, ill-shaved, stupid fellow, with wrinkled, cheap clothes and a bulging, stained waistcoat, lazy, beery, incompetent, with no real interest in the business, give orders to him? Why should he obey them? Why should he stand anything from this fellow? Presently he heard his own voice interrupting Thomson's flow of inanities, which he could endure no longer.

"Look here, Thomson, I want to get on with my work. Go and talk to someone else, if you must talk."

Thomson stared at him.

"What's got you?"

"Oh, shut up and get out of this!" said John very rudely.

"Had a row with the missus?" sneered Thomson. "Look here, don't you talk to me in that tone, see? I'm head clerk here, and I don't stand for it, see?"

"Go to blazes!" said John, and Thomson, faced by something entirely unprecedented in his experience, advised John to see a doctor, preferably a mental specialist, and went to his own desk.

WHEN Elizabeth had finished her household tasks, she went out into the back garden. Beauty at once came shambling and wriggling to her, and laid at her feet a much-chewed stick as a propitiatory offering. Elizabeth was not cruel, she was only fixed in her ways. Mechanically she put out a hand to pat the dog and drew it back sharply when it was licked with enthusiasm. She stood pondering, while Beauty lay down with her head on her paws, looking up at her.

John had been horrid, John had been brutal and rude. He should apologize to her before she forgave him. Master of the house, indeed! She was perfectly justified in refusing to have a dog. She would show him that she was not to be bullied. And yet somewhere, deep down, there was just a tiny thrill at the idea of the masterful John. Poor John, who had no will of his own and had always done what he was told,

who had invariably agreed to all that she and her family had arranged for him—it was really pathetic when you came to think of it, this silly attempt at making her obey him. Her brother Albert had always said that John had no guts. Perhaps if he had shown himself more of a man earlier, things might have been different. But she crushed these insidious thoughts instantly. She was not going to allow John to give himself airs. Of course the dog must go, and going it was, and at once, too.

Elizabeth patted Beauty kindly, as she fastened a piece of clothes line round her neck. At the touch of the line, all Beauty's friskiness disappeared; she shrank dejectedly into a forlorn bundle of legs and drooping tail. She knew what it meant—she was to be taken away from this Paradise: it had happened before. And there was something fearful and hostile about this woman, something quite different from the kind and tender master. Beauty knew that Elizabeth hated her: Beauty crumpled and bowed to her fate. Her fate was to be led by Elizabeth to the police-station.

There Elizabeth told the inspector very nicely how this poor stray had come to their house and they hadn't the heart to drive it away, but had fed it and kept it overnight, but she and her husband felt that they couldn't keep it. And would the inspector be kind enough to take charge of it and send it to one of those homes where they looked after stray dogs? Poor little creature, she was sorry for it, but it couldn't be helped. Her husband was a very nervous man and couldn't bear animals about the house. Elizabeth, in thus presenting herself to the inspector as a tender-hearted woman parting reluctantly from a stray dog for her husband's sake, made quite a touching picture; but she was not lying quite so deliberately as might be thought. She had, by shutting one eye to the truth, as we all do when we want to convince ourselves that we are right and know we are not, persuaded herself that it would really be better for John not to have a dog of which he would get tired, which could only be a source of endless trouble to him. And John was nervous, of course, and she knew what was good for him, and therefore it was for his sake she was doing this, and not because she was angry with him; and, of course, she was not being cruel to the poor little dog.

She was a little surprised, therefore, when the inspector, a grey-moustached, kindly man, who loved dogs, beamed at her and said:—

"Well, ma'am, there's no need for you to worry about that. You'll be relieved to hear that Mr. Brown himself came to see me about the dog this morning. He said that he had changed his mind and resolved to keep the dog after all. Said he'd got fond of it, and if you brought it round I was to tell you that you could keep it after all, and that he was buying a licence this morning."

And as the inspector continued to beam at this kind-hearted lady, all she could find to say was, "Well, I am surprised!" She felt it was impossible to destroy the pretty picture of her distress at parting with Beauty which she had so carefully and convincingly drawn for the inspector. Raging inwardly, she thanked him effusively and took Beauty home again. For a moment she dallied with the idea of losing her, but she had really too kind a heart for that, and she was touched by the manifest joy of Beauty as she found herself back at the house again. No, John had foiled her, but he would have to pay for it. She had still her family in reserve. And brother Bert.

JOHN came home early, and all the afternoon the place rang with sounds of hammering and sawing, as he pieced together a beautiful roomy kennel for Beauty. Beauty frisked about with odd bits of wood or sat absorbed in worship of her wonderful master. Occasionally her master would pause in his labours to fling sticks for her to fetch. Elizabeth heard him saying, "Lie down!" "Fetch it!" "Give it up!" till she felt sick and jealous. At last, when she could bear it no longer, she came out.

"Aren't we going to the pictures?" she asked, coldly. They always went to the pictures on Saturday.

"I'm sorry," said John, hammer in hand, "but I must finish this kennel. Would you mind going alone to-day?"

"Not at all," said his wife. "I shall run over to mother's and take her."

"Do her good," said John, resuming his hammering with obvious relief. Elizabeth hated him and would have liked to poison Beauty.

When she returned there was no sign of John or Beauty. The kennel stood complete and she had to admit that John could do things when he liked, but she was tempted to take the coal-hammer and break it up. She sat down to supper alone, and presently, with a great deal of noise, John and Beauty arrived. She heard him go to the kitchen, talking to the dog all the time, and then take it out to the kennel and give it supper.

Presently John came in and sat down. He had taken Beauty for a walk. And Elizabeth had to hear all about it, and what a clever dog Beauty was. She could

swim, too, and she was wonderfully obedient: she was this and that, and did that and this. She had never seen John so lively and pleased with himself. In spite of herself, she was interested, but, instead of being agreeable, she gave way to a furious jealousy.

"So you couldn't take your wife to the pictures, but you could take that wretched little mongrel for a walk!" she commented bitterly.

"Doesn't do to get into a rut," was John's cheerful reply. She was very fond of John, and she liked to see him happy. He reminded her somehow of the John with whom she had gone away on that wonderful honeymoon, when he was so full of hope and was going to make a fortune some day, and they were going to have a wonderful home full of babies. He had not made the fortune, there were no babies. They had the home, certainly; he was a good husband. Why had he not got on? Was it her fault? Was he secretly disappointed about the babies? Once or twice in the early days he had proposed risking their little capital in some business venture: she had always vetoed it, and her family had backed her up. There had been quarrels, one very bitter one, but John had always given way and come to see how foolish it would be to risk everything when they were comfortable enough. He had a good job, as Albert had pointed out. Why give it up for some mad scheme? If it failed, then Albert would have to help them, and he couldn't afford that. So John had been talked into subjection for his own good. Had it been for his own good or for her comfort? a voice in her mind asked uncomfortably.

Elizabeth, had she known it, was really repeating the conduct of some Stone Age ancestress who had run madly away from a pursuing male armed with a club, driven by some wild fear, but longing to be caught. She feared and hated this new John, who laughed at her and gave orders; she wanted to escape from him, and yet some part of her longed madly to encourage him, to be caught, to obey. Nevertheless, she refused to listen to that part of her. She ran for safety to brother Albert. Albert always came in on Sunday afternoon, and to-morrow Albert was coming to suppress this incipiently mutinous John. She felt that a great principle was at stake: if she gave way about the dog, then their whole life together would have to be revised, and that would be too uncomfortable and unsettling. Yet—yet—nonsense!

ON Sunday afternoon Albert was scathing about the dog, but John paid no attention, and went on giving orders to Beauty and being obeyed. When Elizabeth left them in the dining-room after tea, having placed Albert's usual bottle of beer on the table, she had great hopes of the result. As for Albert, he had no doubt whatever. He wasn't going to stand any nonsense from a fish like John. He poured out a glass of ale, took a long pull at it, and began.

"You know, John, you can't keep that mongrel."

"Why not?" asked John, quietly. He realized as he stared at Albert just how deeply he loathed this beefy, beery person, who had interfered so much in his life. Elizabeth's brother, perhaps, but he hadn't married Elizabeth's family, surely.

"Why not?" said Albert. "Why, simply because Elizabeth doesn't want it, see? And none of us want her worried over a thing like that—we won't stand for it, John, and that's the truth. Send it to a Dogs' Home. What do you want to go upsetting your wife for?"

"What business is it of yours?"

"What business is it of mine? It's my business to see that my sister's properly treated and not insulted in her own house, isn't it? And look here, John, you know you've always taken my advice about things, and it's always been good advice. I've knocked about a bit and I know the world better than you. Take it from me, it's no good going upsetting things all about a dirty little mongrel that I wouldn't be seen out with."

"That's enough, Albert," said John, calmly. "As you say, I've always had your advice, and I've been fool enough to let myself be bullied into taking it. But it's always been bad advice—rotten advice. If I hadn't taken it, I might have been in my own business now, making money, instead of slaving away as a clerk!"

"Oho!" said Albert, very red in the face. "So you think it was bad advice, do you? A pretty business man you'd make! So you think it was bad advice, do you?"

"I do," said John. "And look here, Albert. I can't have you interfering in my affairs any longer."

"What do you mean, interfering in your affairs?" gasped Albert, too astonished to find words to express his rage.

"I mean this, once and for all. When I want your advice, I'll ask for it. Till then, keep it to yourself. The matter of the dog I won't discuss with you."

"So you don't want my advice?"

"No, and I never did. You're not competent to give advice. You're a stupid fellow with a very exaggerated idea of your own importance. Please remember that this is my house and I am master here."

"Oho!" spluttered Albert. "You're master here, are you? It's the first I've

Beauty caressed him. He saw that life was going to be quite different now and that he owed it all to Beauty, who had taught him to give orders. It was astounding to think that he had given orders to Elizabeth and to her dreadful brother and that in both cases they had been obeyed. Strange possibilities opened before him. Thomson, the office bully, was the next case he had to tackle. While he was considering this, his wife came out and stood beside him. He noticed that she wore a much smarter frock than was usual on Monday mornings. He kissed her and she blushed. Beauty licked her hand unreproved. And to hide her confusion she patted Beauty and said, "She really is quite a nice little thing, isn't she?" And John thought that life was a fine thing after all.

At the office Thomson greeted him with a sneering remark. Thomson had been nursing his wrath over the week-end. As soon as John had settled down to his accounts, the other came over to him and, flinging a letter on his desk, said:—

"Take that out at once."

"Have we not an office-boy?" asked John.

heard of it—can't say I ever noticed it."

"Well, notice it in future and don't be impertinent."

And with that John left the room, whistled for Beauty, and went out for a walk. Albert went into the kitchen to confer with Elizabeth.

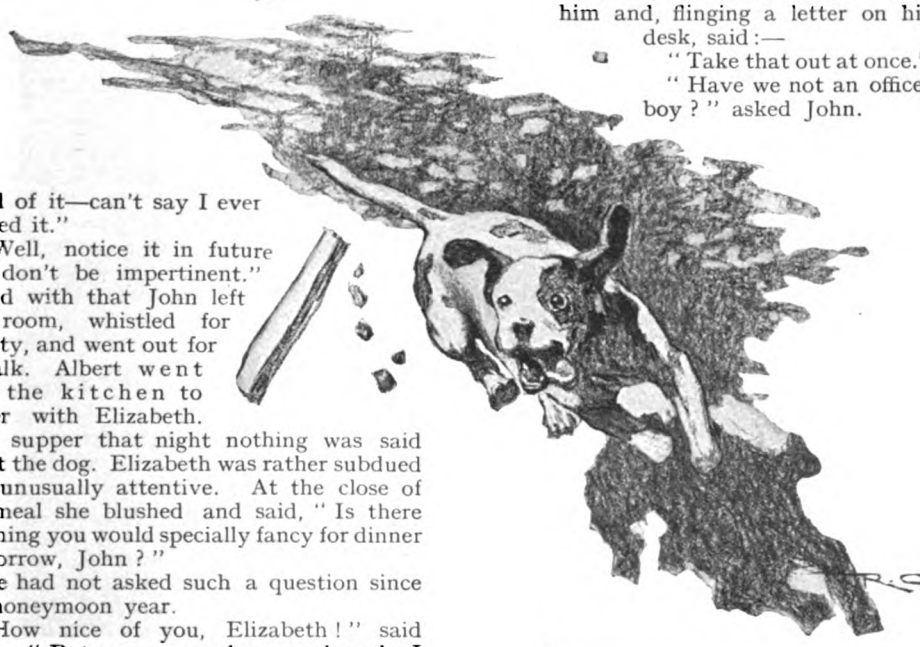
At supper that night nothing was said about the dog. Elizabeth was rather subdued and unusually attentive. At the close of the meal she blushed and said, "Is there anything you would specially fancy for dinner to-morrow, John?"

She had not asked such a question since the honeymoon year.

"How nice of you, Elizabeth!" said John. "But you are such a good cook, I like anything you give me."

Elizabeth went into the kitchen to hide some strange agitation that made her feel shaky all over.

JOHN rose on Monday morning with a feeling of elation. As soon as he was dressed he went out to the garden and caressed Beauty gratefully, almost as gratefully as



Occasionally her master would pause in his labours to fling sticks for her to fetch.

"We have," said Thomson, "but I told you to take it."

"Is it something that requires special attention?" asked John, calmly. He knew that it wasn't.

Thomson glared at him.

"Don't sit arguing with me. Do what I tell you."

"Look here, Thomson," said John, calmly, "there is no reason why the boy should not take it. You are only doing this to annoy me. I'm busy."

"Do you refuse, then?"

"I do. If you're not satisfied go to Mr. Prendergast and explain matters to him. See what he says. Otherwise, either send the boy or go yourself. And, generally speaking, go to the devil."

There was a gasp of astonishment from the other members of the staff. Thomson went back to his desk with a muttered threat.

"All right, my lord," he said. "You'll get what's coming to you. You wait!"

"No," said John, getting up from his chair. "I won't wait. I'll go and get it now." And he walked towards the door of Mr. Prendergast's private office.

Thomson turned a shade paler. He had good reasons for not wishing to push matters so far that an appeal to his employer was involved.

"What d'you mean? There's no need to make a fuss, is there?" he asked, blusteringly. But John had gone down the passage and knocked at the door of the private office.

"Come in," said Mr. Prendergast. John went in and closed the door behind him.

"May I have a moment, sir?"

Mr. Prendergast looked up at this unusual request. Something just a little different about Brown this morning, he thought. "Fire away," he said, genially.

"Thomson and I can't both remain in this office," said John, firmly.

"Is that so?" asked Mr. Prendergast, sarcastically. "In that case, as Thomson is head clerk, precedent suggests that you will be resigning."

"Just as you wish, sir," said John. "In my opinion, Thomson is, apart from being a bully, an ignorant, incompetent fellow, not fit for his job."

"One moment," interrupted his employer. "You have not been taking a correspondence course in How to Get On in Business, have you?"

John laughed. "No, sir," he said. "I know all about this business without that."

"Oh!" said Mr. Prendergast, noting the laugh. "What's the explanation, then?"

John hesitated; then something made him blurt it out.

"You may think me crazy, but the explanation is a stray dog."

"I have lived long enough to be surprised at nothing, Brown. Explain."

"Well, the fact is that I have always been too humble. I've obeyed other people all my life and wondered why I did not get on. I've knuckled under to Thomson and he treats me like dirt. Last Friday a stray bitch came to my house. It tried to lick my hands and I said 'Lie down!' It lay down. That was the first real order I had ever given in my life. And the first time I had ever been obeyed."

"I see," said Mr. Prendergast. "This is really interesting. Go on."

"My wife is a very good woman and I am very fond of her. But she has always managed me—she and her family. I had ideas once of getting out of the rut, but they always prevented me. In fact, they decided and I obeyed—out of slackness, out of habit, for the sake of peace."

"Yes?"

"But when the dog obeyed me, I saw a light. My wife refused to let me keep it. I gave her an order. It was obeyed. She sent for her brother Albert on Sunday. He tried to bully me in the old way. I gave him an order to mind his own business. It was obeyed. That dog, sir, let me into the secret of life."

"And that is?"

"That the people who succeed are those who give orders, and that in nine cases out of ten orders are obeyed for no other reason than that they are given. It's a sort of automatic reaction to an order."

"H'm! So you've found it out, have you, Brown? I congratulate you. There is, of course, a little more to it than that, but, roughly speaking, you're right. And now, what about Thomson?"

"I gave Thomson an order this morning—and he obeyed it. But I've had enough of him. He's an incompetent person, and tries to hide his incompetence by bullying. That doesn't work with me now."

"He keeps things going," said Mr. Prendergast.

"My case against Thomson," said John, "is not only that I dislike him as an inferior. He is slack, he is out and in to the nearest bar all day, he drinks too much beer, his mind is constantly fuddled, he doesn't take any real interest in the business. Who installed the new costing system? Was it your head clerk? No, it was me. Who thought of the card index system we use? Was it Thomson? I did it. Who was responsible for that lot of inferior hides we bought? Thomson, who bought them on the word of a pal of his, without any examination. Who took a secret commission on the deal? Ask

Flinging a letter on his desk, he said: "Take that out at once." "Have we not an office-boy?" asked John.

Thomson! I don't know, mind you—but ask him."

"And now you're giving orders to me, Brown," said Mr. Prendergast. "Don't go ahead too fast. All you say about Thomson is true enough—I'm not blind. He is the son of an old clerk of my father's and we've kept him where he is largely out of sentiment. But now that you've discovered this horrible secret about obeying orders, I can see that there will be very little room for sentiment in the business. Suppose I sack you, what will you do?"

John kept a brave face while his heart sank. He had risked everything on this throw.

"I don't know till the time comes," he said, slowly. "I know a good deal about leather, though."

"In other words, you'll betake yourself to one of my rivals. Sound sense and good business. Well, of the two of you, I can better afford to lose Thomson. I dare say you are right about the commission. I'll talk to him presently, and find out. Next week he will be sent to the warehouse, where he can have another chance, and you will take his place in the office, at an increase of a hundred a year. But I make one condition."

"What is that, sir?"

"That you keep your secret to yourself."

"I'm no fool, sir," said John.

JOHN is now a partner in the firm of Prendergast and Brown. He lives in a pretty house at Leatherhead and keeps an expensive car. His wife adores him, and, as if obeying some unspoken order of John's, has, much to the astonishment of her relations, presented him with two flourishing children. The children play in their fine garden with a very fat old dog called Beauty.

From the Diary of a Dramatist

The Chorus Girl

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by
WILTON WILLIAMS

SHE was Pussy - pussy - purr - purr—typical of the chorus. Hair that had been rendered brassy by some strange concoction was fuzzed about her ears. The remainder of the bird's nest was fortunately hidden beneath a tweeky little hat. Her face, still young and cherubic, was thickly coated with rouge, and her lips, fresh from the dabbing of lipstick, were ripe strawberry-red. Every eyelash had been stiffened with heated black stuff, and her nose, tip-tilted, made to resemble a small round piece of Turkish delight. Joseph's coat had not been so many-coloured as the things she wore, so that one hoped against hope that no conscientious member of the quixotic family of chameleons would catch a sight of her. "Glorious dee," she said, giving an all-over wriggle. "You'll put in a keend word for me, won't yer, Mr. Hamilton? I may say, without pullin' the blind down, that I shall be very, very glad of a job." Hers was the neen-neen-double-feeve accent of the London telephone girl, though her voice was far more ingratiating than those of that harassed breed.

"You'll put in a keend word for me, won't yer, Mr. Hamilton?"

I gave my promise, went into the theatre, and left the sun behind. There was to be a voice trial that morning for a musical play, the "book" of which was mine, and I knew from bitter experience that I was doomed to listen to the untrained singing of a hundred similar girls.

I arrived in time to find a bevy of Cockney stage hands carrying out the scenery of a dead play—a funereal moment not greatly relieved by a loud discussion of that day's racing by the indifferent undertakers. There also was the inevitable figure of a shabby but flamboyant person waiting for a silver answer to an urgent question, sent in the form of a note to someone who, like myself, had come to attend the trial. An actor out of

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grease-paint, who had perhaps played Hamlet on the road or Sherlock Holmes in a tenth-rate company which haunted summer resorts. The doorkeeper, clean and tidy, even in the rabbit-box which was all that he and his useful kind are ever provided with, knew me, gave me "good morning" and letters—begging letters, some of them pathetic enough to render that sunny morning very far from good.

Reaching the stage by way of a chilly and barrack-like passage, I found its three high walls devoid of scenery. The safety curtain composed its fourth, against which I refrained from leaning. It had a way of covering one's back with a sort of woolly dust. A table had been placed beneath a strong electric light and at this were seated several men in hats and overcoats. A wise precaution, because the place was colder than charity and at the mercy of insidious draughts.

"I've got laryngitis or somethin'," she said. "Sha'n't do myself no good."

In the shadow at the back, sitting and standing, there was a bevy of girls who had swarmed like chickens at food-time in answer to the call. Some were young and pretty and therefore confident. They laughed and talked and broke from time to time into dance steps, with most gymnastic ease. Others were neither pretty nor young, and I could see that they were endeavouring to overcome this heaviest of handicaps by the nervous simulation of alluring coyness. It was a little painful to watch. A piano had been placed on the left of the table, and at this a short, plump, elderly young man was sitting in a *blasé* attitude with a mop of musical hair. It was plain to see that he had endured this tragic proceeding many times. He addressed the stage-manager by his Christian name, but called the orchestra leader "sir."

The former was a man who seemed to be charged with nitrates, who suffered, probably, from a high blood-pressure, smoked one foul cigar after another, and issued conflicting orders in a loud, cantankerous voice. Before approaching people could formulate their questions he whipped out, "What is it? What is it? No." The latter, a neat and dapper person with a Viennese moustache, who strutted about with short, quick steps and rapping heels, asking all and sundry, "Vy do ve vait, Mon Dieu? Vat is the 'itch to-day?" The little nippy man, who seemed to have escaped from the pages of Dickens, and who might have been under twenty or over the forty mark, scudding about the stage like a sheep-dog, yapping at the heels of the chorus ladies and rounding in late arrivals to the pen, was, of course, the call-boy. He had an accent riper than that of the chauffeur in "Man and Superman," and answered to any name that sprang into the mind, especially if it were "George." He had naturally been christened Albert.

I had erred, impatiently, on the punctual side of my appointment, but was lucky enough only to be kept waiting a bare three-quarters of an hour. A slight stir and a sudden silence at last announced the arrival of the manager. He wore a gardenia and an injured air, and went quickly into the light—a fat man, glossy, irascible, somewhat short of breath, who dressed *en suite*, matching his collar, tie, socks, and handkerchief to whatever suit he wore. It was a vivid blue that day. Not an actor, it was his pose nevertheless to play the part of one whose soul was not his own and who, like Atlas, bore the weight of the world on his shoulders. "Now then, now then," he snapped at those who had not dared to keep him waiting. "What on earth's the matter? Why can't we begin?" At which, having bent over a list of names to hide an ironic smile, the stage-manager darted a look at the mass of silent humanity in the shadow and called "Miss Montgomery."

A pretty girl stepped forward in very pretty clothes, took up a position at the elbow of the pianist, and gave him a dog-eared song. "I've got laryngitis or somethin'," she said. "Sha'n't do myself no good. However, let it go." Whereupon, pressing the loud pedal with a dirty shoe, the grinning

She was permitted to sing to the end. "All right," said the manager. "My office. Three o'clock."

pianist played the prelude with a certain dash. A shrill, harsh voice rang out. The manager hit the table with an open hand after the first six bars. "That'll do," he said, wrote V R A G against the name—voice rotten, appearance good—and added, "You can wait. Go on."

"Miss Montpelier." The chorus looks down on every name that is not five hundred years old.

The next candidate was tall, angular, and not conspicuously young, and because of fright and intense anxiety to add a few shillings a week to a narrow family purse, her voice, though full and true, cracked on the first high note. "V G A R" was scribbled against her name. "Leave your address. Good-bye." She left her address with the call-boy, and with something damp on her eyelashes hurried away from the stage. She had often left her address, I could see, without the smallest result.

The third was plump and merry, cheeky, and as cool as a fish, and, when she pushed her music at the pianist, said, "Melba this time, Paddywhisky." He laughed, and so did the men at the table. Her voice was plump and merry, and she bubbled through her song, so that the pianist enjoyed himself and the orchestra leader looked happy. She was permitted to sing to the end. "All right," said the manager. "My office. Three o'clock." A little sigh ran from one untried girl to the other like a breeze among trees.

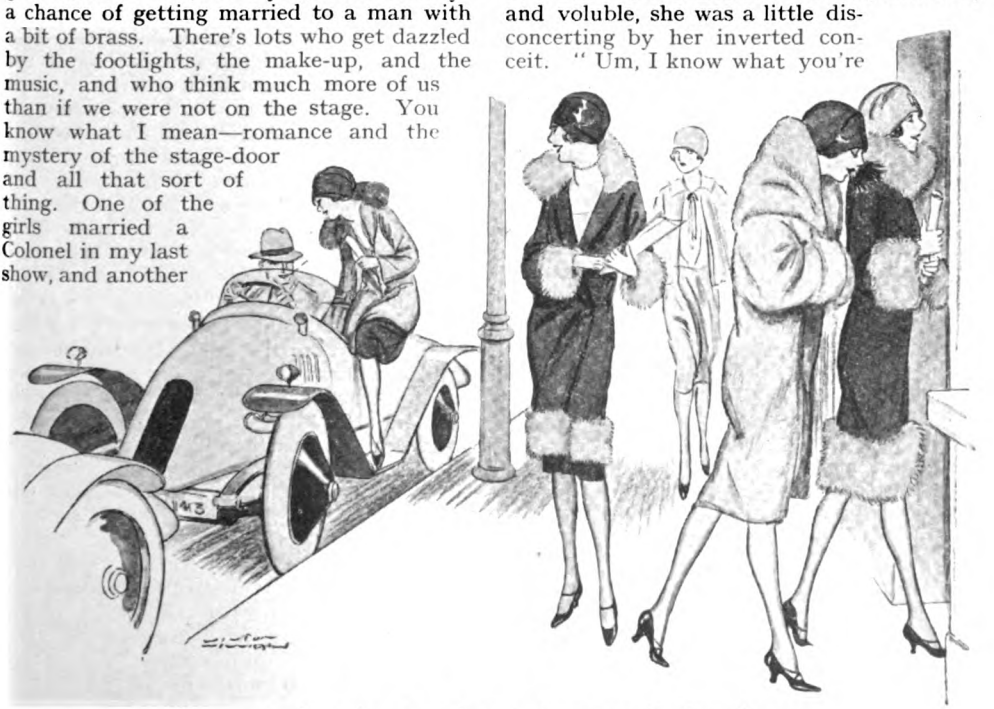
And so it went on for hours. Against the majority of names N G was written, and sometimes P D A, G and V G hardly ever, though A G V R, to which was added "My office" by a more and more tired voice, appeared from time to time on that long, pathetic list. Many of those poor children were so agitated and nerve-racked that they did themselves scant justice, They stood in awkward attitudes with twisting fingers and sang hideously out of tune. Others sang in their boots and wavered, stopped before the hand of Judgment fell heavily on the table, grabbed their music, and ran. Those of whom it could be said that their voices were rotten but appearances good were pounced upon by the call-boy, but those with good voices who could not be labelled pretty by a lenient pencil were shouted down and driven into the street.

AMONG these eager-to-work young women to whom the hard life of the chorus meant bread and butter and roof, there was, as usual, a smattering of girls who were quite expensively dressed. They had arrived at the stage-door in long torpedo-shaped cars, driven by beardless boys in hats with flopping brims, who sat behind their steering wheels during the voice trial, gazing with fatuous affection at their silver mascots. These stood aloof with supercilious noses, and sang with carelessness. For the most part they were good-looking, well-groomed, and attractive, and thus were engaged on sight. Not, however, for the working chorus, but for show girls who stood about. I had seen their kind before and knew that they would prove to be a constant source of worry and irritation, being erratic and insubordinate, with no other interest in their work than to be seen on the stage every night. Bored and

depressed by this long, noisy, and rather cruel process of elimination and selection, and far more interested in the human than in the vocal side of the business, I spent most of these hours in the shadows, talking to the girls. Pussy-pussy-purr-purr—for whom I did put in a word and who went off smiling to eat a hard-boiled egg before lining up in the manager's office at the magic hour of three—had many duplicates among the crowd. One of them had been in another play of mine, and on the strength of that, and also because she had been a chamber-maid in the house of one of my friends, chatted about herself. " Well, yes, I suppose I was better off and more comfortable in service," she said, " with nothing to do but make the beds and dust the furniture, sleep in a nice room, eat good food, and spend most of my wages on my back. But *I* like life, I do, and there are only two ways to get it for the likes of me. The other ain't in my line and won't be, but the chorus, when the piece runs, does the trick all right. Yer see, it means London, bright lights, and excitement, and if the stage-manager's a decent little feller and yer work like a horse and smile from ear to ear, everything goes on wheels and the money's pretty good. Half-a-dozen of us share a couple of rooms in a back street and pan in on the food, and there's nobody to order us up in the morning or pounce when we get in late. Then, mind you, there's always a chance of getting married to a man with a bit of brass. There's lots who get dazzled by the footlights, the make-up, and the music, and who think much more of us than if we were not on the stage. You know what I mean—romance and the mystery of the stage-door and all that sort of thing. One of the girls married a Colonel in my last show, and another went to church with an old Scotch gent with a factory up North. He's old enough to be her father, but she's got two pianos and a motor, a chinchilla coat, and a bull-dog. What more can any girl want ? "

It was in some such words as these that many of those small adventurers expressed their creed to me. Like this one, they had been servants or waitresses, worked in dress-makers' shops, or served beer in country inns far, too far, from the madding crowd. " Life " was what they needed and freedom to be their own mistresses. They preferred the glamour of the theatre to the humdrum and monotony of other employments, and were perfectly cheerful under the hardships and humiliations, the bullying, and the uncertainties of the stage. They had escaped from the regular routine of day work and could kick their heels about. Honest and philosophical, self-respecting and shrewd, with no false hopes of rising from the chorus to small parts or a niche in the profession, they frankly loved the city, the constant roar of traffic, the sense of being alive, and their only deep-rooted ambition was to catch someone in front—and better themselves by a marriage otherwise impossible to achieve. They worshipped the little gold ring, especially if it could be preceded by one with a diamond.

I talked to one of the girls who were known as " Back row O P side." Small, bird-like, and voluble, she was a little disconcerting by her inverted conceit. " Um, I know what you're



They arrived at the stage-door in long torpedo-shaped cars.

thinkin'," she said, before my opening remark. " Ugly ducklin', what? Well, that's right, and I can't do nuthin' about it. But wait till you hear me sing! Mine isn't a voice. It's an organ. If someone had been a little less careless in the way of mer face and mer figger I should have been in opera and the darlin' of the world. You'll see what happens after Bouncy plays the prelude. It's always just the same. The musical director'll 'ave a fit of joy and the manager and stage-manager'll put their 'eads together and say, ' She'd scare an old steam-roller, but, oh Golly, can't she sing!' I shall be engaged all right, there isn't a doubt about it, and put behind the biggest girls and bits of rock and trees, and when you 'ear something rising from the chorus that'll lift you up to Heaven it'll be me." It was no exaggeration. She had the voice of a lark. The verdict was " My office. Three o'clock." As she went out she nodded, and I knew that she was saying: " There you are, you see."

I went up to a girl who, it seemed to me, looked strangely like a fish out of water in that atmosphere, and who, when " tried," sang with a cultivated voice and an educated enunciation. She was well and quietly dressed, and although not strikingly pretty was very nice-looking and with an imperturbable air. Her place was in Bond Street on a shopping expedition or riding in the Row. She laughed when I asked her what she was doing in that *galère*, and her answer was perfectly frank.

" I'm quite fed up with what the papers call refinement," she said. " I'm out for a little fun. The dreary round of semi-society among the wives of new knights and the daughters of successful doctors is a frightfully boring business after one's had it all one's life. It's rather exciting "—the same old word—" to be herded into ill-ventilated dressing-rooms at the top of a theatre, shouted at by an exasperated stage-manager, and called pet names by a facetious call-boy, for a change. I like having something to do in the evening. It's exhilarating to hear the orchestra, to dash on with a toothy smile, to listen to applause and laughter, to talk to stars and comics, to feel the glare of lights, to do one's bit and enjoy the exercise and rhythm. It's the only sort of adventure that my sort of girl can indulge in, and it works something out of my system that might lead to complications if it went off at a different tangent—I know that very well. Yes, of course it needs tact to keep friendly with the girls, otherwise they'd resent me and make things unbearable. But that's quite easy, and you can't think how thrilling it is to jump about in the sort of clothes that would be denounced as outrageous in my respectable set. Call it the desire of the canary to imitate the sparrow, or whatever else you like. It's a harmless safety-valve "

I agreed with her, and it was not for me to hint at the fact that this hard-working self-indulgence certainly deprived a girl who was perhaps obliged to contribute to a meagre family pot from an engagement which would make a welcome difference to her cheerfulness.

BEFORE the rehearsal of the principals some days later I looked into that beehive of a theatre to see what the chorus was doing. The lyric writer was with me, a man just down from Oxford, where he had enjoyed a distinguished career. He had, that is to say, poured verse into the *Isis*, achieved an enviable reputation as the inventor of erratic garments, been plucked in all his examinations, and dragged to the station in a hearse in the middle of his second year, when the authorities had come to the unanimous conclusion that the University would maintain more dignity (though very much less colour) without his anarchical presence. He now chased round London's theatrical circle like a young and irrepressible terrier out for a daily run, but wrote lyrics while you waited with inexhaustible wit. He also spent his earnings like water and his leisure in dodging writs. Catching sight of a too-innocent-looking person approaching us at that moment, he made a dive into the stage-door and hid for the rest of the morning in the darkness of a box.

The girls were hard at work, and in learning the intricate contortions of the first *ensemble* number were gymnastically employed. All the hats and frocks that had been shed by them were in heaps at the back of the stage. In blouses and knickers, some with and some without stockings, they were drawn up in front of the dancing-master in a sweeping semicircle. " Bouncy " was at the piano, which he banged with careless joy, and " Tubby," the dancing-master, with recalcitrant looks in his eyes, bobbed about like a cork in a once white rowing sweater. He himself performed every one of the movements that he ordered the girls to do, wrung his hands with hysterical grief when they blundered or worked out of time, and then collapsed into a panting heap when all his breath had gone. " One-two-three-four-*kick*," he cried. " One-two-three-four-*turn*. One-two-three-four-*bend*. One-two-three-four-*spring*. Stop! . . . You, Number Four, my pet, my darling, my beautiful swan. You're rotten. You're awful. You have no more sense of time than a clock with broken works. If I have to pull you up again, my precious, I'll rush you to

"You, Number Four, my pet, my darling, my beautiful swan. You're rotten. You're awful."

Trafalgar Square and drown you in the fountain." After which, shaking back his locks, stamping his foot, waving his hand to Bouncy, he did it all over again. Withered, crushed, and anxious, poor little Number Four strained every effort to please the martinet.

But she was not alone in earning his sudden outbursts of mingled love and hate. One by one every other girl was singled out for abuse, during which Swinburnian expletives of admiration were hurled with malignant force. For the most part they stood the shock with a fine and patient courage, recovered their breath for the most athletic movement, and carried out instructions with the deepest earnestness. At this early date in the proceedings they were all rather like willing horses stumbling about on ice. Here and there one broke down and burst out crying, but continued in the all-too-joyous prancing with tears dripping from the tip of her nose. From one or two, more resentful and hot-tempered than the rest, snappy answers were flung back, such as "Oh, shut up and get on with it. Advertise out in the street." To these, a gentle soul at heart, but faced with the difficult task of moulding what was partly new material into a finished and standardized whole, the able and ambitious dancing-master turned a deaf and tactful ear. Over and over again the music was repeated with deadly reiteration, over and over again the intricate steps were illustrated, imitated, and performed, and when, every quarter of an hour, human endurance and heart-power having been strained to the breaking-point, a brief armistice was declared, the teacher fell on his back and the breathless girls on their faces. During these brief but frequent pauses the stage resembled nothing so much as a scene of wholesale murder. At these times Bouncy, whose fingers itched for the piano in spite of weariness, dribbled into the Moonlight Sonata or one of Heller's Sleepless Nights.

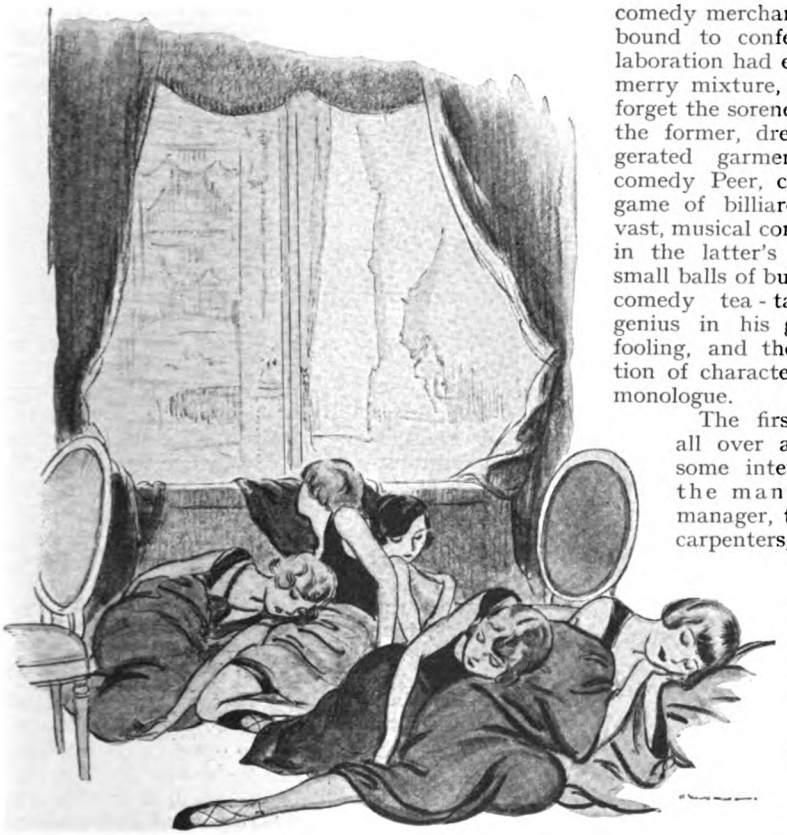
BETWEEN eleven and a quarter-past the principals drifted in, the comedy merchant in snow-white spats but the lowest possible spirits, the leading man in a waisted coat and fresh from the barber's shop. The small-part people very merry and bright and hoping for extra lines, the towering lady with a haughty air who was cast for the heroine's mother, and finally the little star with a little dog, which was to whine away two hours in the doorkeeper's cubby-hole. Whereupon, after the inevitable squabble between the dancing-master and the director of the book as to who should have the stage, the chorus got wearily into frocks again and went creaking into the street. "Back at four o'clock." On this occasion it was the system to keep the chorus and the principals apart until the last week of rehearsals, and, when at last they met, to go through the songs and dances, opening choruses and finales, exactly "as on the night." The days and nights of the last week began early, ended late, and chaos became supreme. The scenery was assembled, the dresses began to arrive, the orchestra tackled the music, and

everybody connected with the production swarmed in the shrouded stalls—manager, syndicate, composers, lyric-writer, author, dressmakers, scene-painters, shoemakers, tailors, electricians, publicity men, friends and relations, enemies and the usual theatrical crows, and each one, except the latter, who thrived on failures, was obsessed with the idea that on his or her contribution depended the run of the piece.

BY this time the book was a thing of the past. The little star had made an unerring collection of all the best lines in the play, had quietly or unquietly annexed all the best of the numbers, and demanded or wheedled the insertion of several new scenes in which she was wholly concerned, while the comedy merchant, egged on by the manager, had written the rest for himself. The composer and lyric-writer had gathered up the broken pieces of several discarded numbers and by dint of excellent memories, midnight oil, and cigarettes provided substitutes, and those of the principals who had not been fired were hardly on speaking terms. With the title still intact on the bills outside the theatre the first dress rehearsal was called at six o'clock and began at half-past nine. For good or ill the dancing-master, in his once white sweater, retired from the stage. He had lost several superfluous pounds of flesh, but added to his belief in human nature from the pluck and endurance of the girls—" my blasted little darlings," as he called them. " With a similar number of men drawn from the same class," he told me, wearing a collar for once, " I couldn't have done a thing. There's something in these girls, hardly any of whom have had any useful previous training, that astonishes me every time. A spirit, an innate love of movement and sense of rhythm, an imitative faculty that's almost monkey-like, a capacity to come back, half dead, and do it over again—by Jove, it's wonderful ! I drive 'em hard, poor little devils—I have to. The time's so short. They begin by hating the sight of me, but they end with respect and affection because I know my job. What beats me is why they come here when they can be far more comfortable as parlour-maids. The fascination of the footlights, is it ? No ? Oh, I see. You think it's the desire for adventure and to become the owners of the day. Well, perhaps you're right. They're good stuff—I know that."

If he had not been so completely worn out and voiceless, he might have added that for girls with ambition and talent, grace and good looks, the training gained as a member of the chorus is the best that can be had. He might have pointed to Marie Tempest and Gladys Cooper, Gertie Millar and Billie Burke—there are many more at the top of the theatrical tree—all of whom graduated from the only real school provided by the English-speaking stage. He might very well have argued that the manufacture of his raw recruits into sprightly and efficient little soldiers of the stage gave them a confidence, an attack, a glitter to be achieved by no other means. The right way to begin is at the beginning, not half-way up the ladder, and the chorus provides an apprenticeship more thorough and complete than that of all the schools of acting, except, perhaps, the French. It teaches team work and *esprit de corps*, suppleness and quickness of movement, rhythm and gracefulness. Where there is a voice it is captured and encouraged ; where beauty, it is enhanced and brought forth. Where there are both, with ambition to boot, preferment is a matter of course. And it is true to say that almost any girl from the chorus who can win her way to leading parts in a musical play is better fitted to fill those of the legitimate stage than one who has wandered into the theatre as an understudy, come into town from a stock company with all its careless tricks; or passed through a languid school. She has risen from the ranks, been drilled and driven, worked her own way from rung to rung, faced the actual footlights from the moment of the beginning, and knows the alphabet of her profession from A to Z. If most of the youthful leading ladies of to-day were taken out of the electrics which they have come by through accident and given two years in the chorus with all that it entails, it would be far less difficult to cast legitimate plays and a splendid thing for the stage.

The curtain rose at half-past nine that evening, and for the first time the results were apparent of the combined effort, like that of creating a bridge or building a railway, to fit that puzzle together. The raucous voices of the master-carpenter and electrician were stilled at last. The shattered stage-manager yelled his final direction. The house lights were switched off. The bubble of voices in the body of the theatre died away. The excitable orchestra leader tapped his baton on his music-stand and the band commenced. The curtain rose and the chorus swept into place, eager, smiling, and as full of energy as the engines of a ship. There, among a heterogeneous audience, sat Bouncy, with his mouth open, and a glitter in his eyes, There, no longer flat and fatigued, but eager and tingling, was Tubby, counting under his breath. One-two-three-four-*kick*. One-two-three-four-*turn*. One-two-three-four-*bend*. . . . There, watchful and alert, with a note-book, the dinky male dress-designer among a cluster of his girls.



On the floor of the boxes, in every pose of fatigue, lay the bodies of the chorus girls in heaps.

It was to be hoped that they had not swallowed any pins. There the composer, ecstatic, as his melodies came to life ; there the lyricist, beaming, repeating his verses with glee ; there the artist who had painted the scenery and the man by whom it was built ; the maker of artificial flowers who had trailed the sweet-peas up ; the owner of the shop in which the shoes had grown ; the printer of the music, hoping for several hits ; the proprietor of the bar, to whom the sound of drawing corks was the music he really loved ; the box-office clerks with cynical mouths and expressions of " Well, show me " ; and all alone in the front row, with his feet on a thick brass rail, Atlas, with the world on his shoulders and a little prayer in his heart.

As for me, the author of what was, at first, a book, my interest and amusement lay in picking out of that salad the little pieces of my original work like bits of onion which cropped up from time to time. All the rest of it, quite new to me, had come from the brains and the old joke-books of the comedy merchant and star. I am bound to confess that their collaboration had evolved a deft and merry mixture, and I shall never forget the soreness of my ribs when the former, dressed in the exaggerated garments of a musical comedy Peer, conducted a lonely game of billiards in the strange, vast, musical comedy drawing-room in the latter's house, with three small balls of butter on the musical comedy tea-table. There was genius in his grave and fatuous fooling, and the keenest observation of character in his ridiculous monologue.

The first act was played all over again, after a tiresome interval during which the manager and stage-manager, the electricians and carpenters, conducted a shouting match, because the scenery of the second act had failed to arrive. By one of those ghastly mistakes which nearly always happen, it had been delivered at another theatre and stacked in a surprised alley in the purlieus of Soho. Language flew from side to side, from stage to stalls, like pigeons, and the first act unwound itself all over again from the beginning while a rival play, verging on tragedy, was enacted in the stalls.

From time to time the angry voices in the body of the theatre rose above those of the actors on the stage. " Yes, you did," " No, I didn't." " Well, then, what the—— Who the——" rang alongside " Darling, I love you, I've loved you from the first," and it was only during the numbers, when the chorus yelled and the band was *forte*, that the play of mimic life got the better of actuality as it was fought out in the stalls.

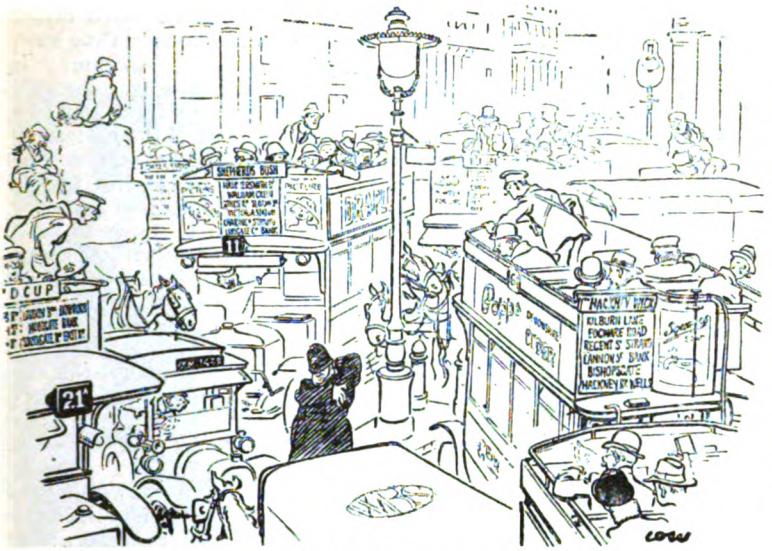
It was the witching hour of midnight before the recaptured scenery turned up, and during the lengthy and noisy process of fitting it together, with hammerings and slingings, cursings and reproachings, urgings and interferings, that the chorus, dressed in the bathing-clothes for the opening number of the second act, possessed themselves of the boxes in which to snatch a welcome sleep. At one o'clock I returned to the theatre, having partaken of supper with the

lyric-writer at a Shaftesbury Avenue club, where, to his annoyance and admiration, he had been served with cold roast beef and a writ by a man disguised as a waiter—and was met with a sight that I have never tried to forget. The theatre was in absolute silence, and but for the slowly-moving figures of several men who were putting the final touches to the set an epidemic of sleeping sickness might have attacked that swarming place. The members of the orchestra sat with sagging shoulders, while their leader was hunched on his seat in an attitude of despair. Among the worn-out people in the stalls, who looked as if they had been gassed, Bouncy lay like a burst gasbag with his hair all over his face. Near by the irresistible Tubby had given up the ghost and the male dressmaker among all his girls was leading a chorus of snores. An ominous peace had settled upon the manager and stage-manager, who, with glassy eyes, were sitting elbow to elbow looking into the future with little confidence. The principals and the small part people had retired to dressing-rooms. Draughts and ropes and shoutings had driven them away. But on the floor of the boxes, in every pose of fatigue, there lay the bodies of the chorus girls in heaps. Chilly in one-piece bathing suits, some were covered with coats. Some, too tired to fetch them, were clasped in each other's arms. They seemed to resemble nothing so much as young and newly-shorn sheep suffering from the effects of an impish frost after the fictitious arrival of spring. Rouge was on their faces and blackened eyelashes on powdered cheeks. Yellow heads and gooseflesh limbs were strangely intermingled. A sigh, a groan, a shiver, a murmur of protestation, a spreading movement, a re-settlement, a closer gathering together, and then silence again. Poor little souls!

Suddenly, returning to the present, the manager said something to the stage-manager, who came back too and rose. With a yell of "Second act, please," life came back to that place. The band jerked up and instruments were tuned. People in the stalls yawned and straightened, the principals emerged, and the chorus, with a burst of chatter and cheers, sprang to their weary feet, and no one would have thought who saw them, going with sprightly energy through the gymnastic intricacies of the opening number as fresh as paint, that a moment before they had been lying apparently dead, unseeing, unmourned, unmissed.

I WATCHED them with renewed admiration and astonishment and echoed Tubby's praise. To the deliberate choice, the waywardness, the dire necessity, or the search for adventure that had brought those girls to that life there were to be added courage and grit and high spirits, a commendable co-operation, a deep humanity. A spirit of democracy, too, which made it possible for ex-shop girls and servants, waitresses and needlewomen, to mix with kindness and friendship with the daughters of knights and generals, parsons, doctors, and squires—Judy O'Grady and the Colonel's lady, sisters under their skins. It was by no means improbable that among those forty girls there was one whose beauty and talent might lead to electric letters and stardom, international fame and pearls. It was on the cards, let them be cut as they might, that another was destined for headlines as a modern Nell Gwyn—the temporary toast of the town. And who could say that there was not one in that ever-moving line who—it had happened before and history repeats itself—would go one day from stage door to Chapel Royal to become the wife of a Peer? She might not, as in a well-known case, having acquired the most fashionable drawl, be handed, tall and regal, out of her gleaming car by the uniformed doorkeeper of the Carlton, who was her proud, inarticulate father, and give him the regular tip—while her husband called him "old bean" and smacked him on the back—but she might take her place in Society and win respect and esteem. But those less well-endowed and lucky, less ambitious and shrewd, must go from theatre to theatre sharing rooms and meals and gossip, seeing life, as they called it, and being in the hub of things. One-two-three-four-*kick!* One-two-three-four-*spring!*—so long as youth remained. Then, if they had not been able to catch a man with brass and a sense of romance, or a Scotchman with a factory, and the letters that stood for "No blooming good" appeared against their names—then, you may well ask, what?

(Another article by Mr. Cosmo Hamilton will appear shortly.)



Traffic confusion caused by constable having assumed a new and rather ticklish undervest.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

over the calculation, I discover that I am now thirty-five years old. My *opus magnum*, in the early days, was a drawing of a Scotchman; and my father, who is a Scotchman, still persists that it is the best thing I ever did. The proprietor of a local weekly paper owed him a sum of money, which my father offered to write off and stay legal proceedings if he printed my drawing. The proprietor decided to let the case go to court.

I was not a very robust youngster, and, as I was supposed to be overstudying, I was removed from school and dispatched to the country, there to live for four lazy years amongst cows and hens. I succeeded in converting the fowl-house into a studio, and although inquisitive chickens occasionally perched upon my shoulder, they made no further objection. But the edges of several of my pictures were nibbled by the rats.

When the cows and hens were not helping me to build up my constitution I found time to draw many hundreds of "jokes," which I sent to England, to such papers as *Chips*, *Sniggers*, and *Scraps*. They always came back—except when they got lost in the post. But *The Big Budget*, a London paper now defunct, surrendered after a protracted bombardment, and printed a series of three drawings. There was no indemnity from either side. I then sold a political skit to a Christchurch paper and was paid half a crown. My parents saw to it that I spent the money sensibly.

Jam-pot labels, racecourse and show cards all came under my attention at this period, but one of my most curious efforts was connected with a penny-in-the-slot machine, which I believe is still working. It displays to the unwary possessor of a penny a series of "stereoscopic views," from my

Householder: "Would you mind taking your victim a little further along? You'll wake the baby."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

brush, of the famous Burns-Johnson fight. Later, a murder took place in the fish shop owned by the proprietor of the machine, and he wanted me to do a second series depicting the life and death of the hero.

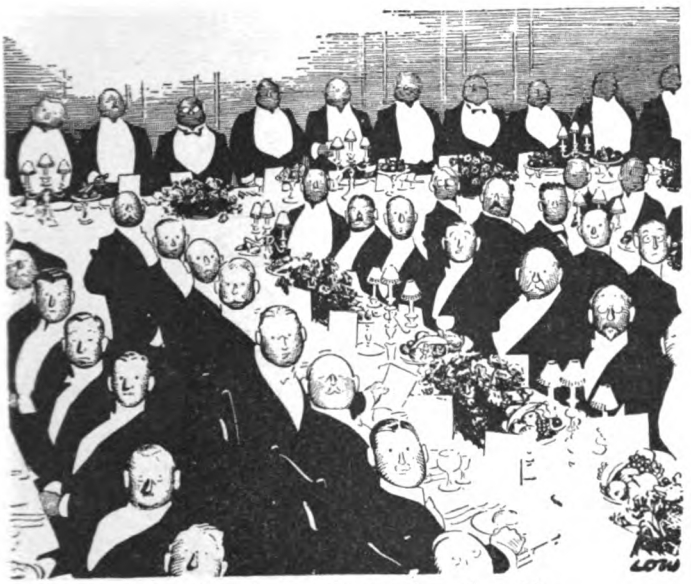
A vision of fame and fortune was opened to readers of the Children's Corner of *The New Idea* about twenty-three years ago, when the editor offered prizes in a series of literary and artistic competitions. One of my humble efforts, entitled "The Sandwich Man," was published in an early contest. The ham in the sandwich was extremely lean, but the bread was liberally buttered with a legend to the effect that *The New Idea* was the best magazine in the world! In the following issue I attained the distinction of silver medallist, my subject being "the funniest animal I have ever seen." The animal, needless to say, was represented as being consumed with joy over the pages of *The New Idea*. After that brilliant idea, which again confirmed the editor in his private opinions, I consistently scooped the prizes.

By permission of "The Star."

As an experiment, I went to a murder trial one day, with the object of drawing sketches of the accused for a sensational paper. Three bad men were on trial, and the details of the case, to say the least, were rather fruity. I was still wearing knickerbockers at the time, and the court orderly, thinking me too young to be present, tried to put me out. Fortunately, the magistrate recognized me, and I was allowed to remain and do the pictures, which were duly published. One of the men was ultimately hanged; but the other two, I believe, turned King's Evidence and were acquitted. Some days later I was "enjoying a bob's worth" in the gallery of a theatre in Christchurch. To my surprise and concern I found myself sitting next to the two villains. They knew me. They had seen their "pictures" in the paper. And they had a peculiar glint in their eyes as they watched me. So, arguing that discretion is still the better part of valour, I took the boys out, drank their health, and we parted the best of friends. But it was a disturbing quarter of an hour.

Feeling the dignity of the Lows to be at stake, my parents put their feet down upon my escapades and selected the Church as my goal. Yes, the cartoonist of *The Star* as a parson! I tried to combine a post on *The New Zealand Exhibition Sketcher* with my studies, with the result that someone fell with a thud outside the examination-room. My clerical career ended, I spent some time working for various papers, and at the age of nineteen went to Australia on the staff of the Sydney *Bulletin*, the most important weekly paper in Australia.

By force of circumstance I came to specialize on Hughes, the famous Australian statesman. Metaphorically, I climbed over Hughes's face into public notice. He was to me what Gladstone was to Tenniel, and what Boss Tweed was to Nast. Besides sketching him, I modelled a small head in plasticine, which was sent to Japan, where a hundred thousand copies were made. The little effigy fitted on a glove worn on the hand, and, clothed with this imitation of a barrister's robe, it was a faithful but somewhat unflattering doll-likeness of "Dr. Hughes." When he returned to Australia from the Versailles Peace Conference he was greeted on the wharf by a crowd wagging these things at him. Chocolate "Billies" were also produced for the consumption of young Australians.



The levelling tendency of modern life.
(As exposed by the flashlight camera.)
By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

In 1915 I produced a book of caricatures of everybody who was anybody in Australasia. But "Billy" Hughes was always my pet subject. "Billy" was my own property. He had a face which was a standing temptation to the cartoonist. When I brought out my book about him fifty thousand were sold. They were poured into the trenches. And it was the "Billy Book" that resulted, indirectly, in my coming to this country.

I remember once having to include a steam-roller in one of my cartoons. Now, whilst a mechanical draft of a steam-roller is accurate, it is not artistic, so I telephoned to the Corporation offices and asked where I could see a roller at work. The official was more than obliging. He inquired where my studio was, and said he would "send one round in the morning." Next day, sure enough, a smoking funnel appeared, and all I had to do was to walk down to the end of the street with my pad and make the sketch. The driver was quite tickled, and drove off like a Government House chauffeur.

The most remarkable gift I have ever received was in connection with some cartoons I was making about the British Lion. Someone sent me a real lion skin of heroic size, magnified in the stuffing and posed in the attitude of one about to spring on an Early Christian. I was out when it arrived, and returned to find this stuffed incubus sitting on my doorstep surrounded by a crowd of small boys and two policemen.

The morning after it nearly killed the charlady who came to sweep the studio.

A friend and I, under cover of night, carried it —he by the mane, I by the tail—to the home of a brother artist and posed it carefully on his front lawn. I heard afterwards that the whole neighbourhood was awakened early the next morning by the horrified shriek of the milkman.

My twelve-thousand-mile journey to England, *viâ* America, was not exactly a joy-ride. I travelled with my sister, the original of my Girl drawings in Australia, and we struck strikes all the way—maritime strike on Melbourne; tramway strike in Chicago; theatrical and steel strike on New York; railway strike in England. When we arrived at last in London, my sister had just a comb and brush, and I had nothing but what I stood up in. Some of the luggage is still missing.

We were privileged *en route* to see Stevenson's glorious harbour of Pago-Pago in Samoa.

Journeying across America, one of our fellow-passengers was a Mormon bishop. He was very entertaining and nearly converted me, whilst he lent his typewriter to my sister. So perhaps there was method in his madness.

When I visited Scotland I was disappointed

By permission of "The Star."

to find the kilts, porridge, haggis, and bagpipes missing. In Dundee I asked a man if no movement had been started for a Brighter Dundee. He replied that one had been launched for a Duller Dundee, by which he meant, I supposed, the Prohibitionist policy of Mr. Scrymgeour. I had an interesting time in Paisley with the Asquith party during the election. Never before had a caricaturist such an opportunity of meeting all the big political guns in action. Lord Oxford, I heard, said afterwards that he was relieved that he could "now get away from that restless young man with the eyebrows"—that was me.

Lord Oxford is a most patient sitter; when I told him so he said, "That is the greatest tribute I have ever had." I like drawing Mr. Churchill because his face is full of humorous "atmosphere." Mr. MacDonald would be good to draw if he would stop cutting his moustache.

Mr. Lloyd George liked several of my representations of himself, and was so amused at one of my cartoons of Clemenceau, Wilson, Venizelos, and Orlando as an unemployed deputation outside Downing Street, that I gave him the original. A correspondent once asked Mr. Lloyd George why the Coalition donkey in one of my cartoons of him had two heads. The statesman's witty answer was that two heads are better than one.

There is more than meets the eye in drawing a caricature. It might be thought that a good photograph, or a series of photographs, would enable me to collect the necessary data for my pencil. This, however, is by no means the case. I go to meetings, dinners, clubs, receptions, lectures, and so on, where the man I intend to caricature may

Mr. H. G. Wells.

Mr. Low considers this his best caricature.

By permission of "The New Statesman."

Two studies of Mr. Bernard Shaw.

By permission of the artist.

be seen, and sketch him as he really lives, moves, and has his being. I do not believe it possible to get the real personality of a man at one arranged sitting. There are dominant traits in every one of us which are revealed only in relaxed moments. Both Shaw and Wells, for instance, are very kindly men at heart, but they cannot be said to make an obvious display of friendship and cordiality at a first meeting.

At such odd moments as I have mentioned, then, I make my first rough sketches as

unobtrusively as possible and, if I can manage it, unknown to my victim. Armed with these preliminary sketches, I next arrange for a sitting; and—I state the fact in all modesty—I find it comparatively easy, in spite of the Englishman's prejudice against appearing grotesque, to get the big men I want to sit for their caricatures.

A certain prominent man becomes rather theatrical when sitting. To avoid this self-consciousness of his I resorted to a ruse. I arranged for him to be invited by a mutual friend to a restaurant and ordered a table close to theirs. I then made my sketch without the distinguished man's knowledge.

In spite of all my caution and discretion it happens, every once in a while, that someone's toes get trodden on, and my letter-box becomes fuller and warmer than usual.

My best caricature, I think, is the one of Mr. H. G. Wells. As Wells himself says, "It has all my points . . . I have been inside him all my life and I can't do him as well as that. . . ." I tried to give something of his external self, but also something of his spiritual self. And that is precisely what a good caricature should do, but very rarely does.

In Australia I used to sing Sir Harry Lauder's songs, but I have ceased doing it now. Lauder is here! My principal hobby is walking, the longest walk I ever did being from Albury to Sydney, a distance of about five hundred miles. Even now, once a year, and usually alone, I do four or five days' tramping, in Warwickshire for choice.

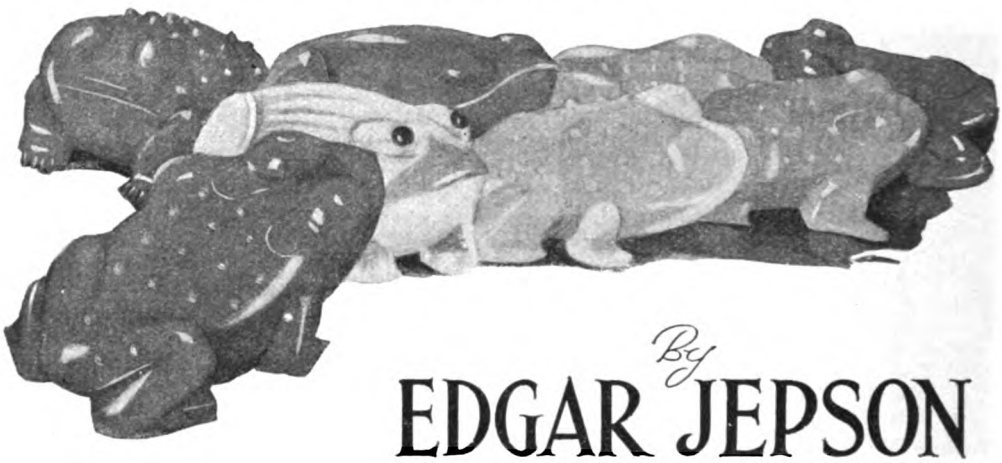
Work alone will not make an artist. But it will prove if he has the artist in him. I work eight hours a day for at least four days a week in my little studio at Hampstead. I go and come quite unknown. And I have trained a good lady to clean and tidy up the place without disturbing anything. Many of my cartoons are drawn from models who are usually paralysed with stiffness. I also make constant use of my own reflection in a large mirror.

My best, but most unwilling, model is my wife. She was more pleased than Griffiths or Michael Collins when the Irish Treaty was signed, for she posed for all my cartoons about Ireland, and was particularly glad to learn that she had no longer to represent poor Ireland drooping in shackles. The more Britannia, Europa, La Belle France, and the other classical ladies remain out of public life, the better my wife is pleased.

My ambition is to live in sunny California. But my probable future is that I shall be hanged for killing a printer!

Mr. Arnold Bennett.
The small sketches were used by the artist in building up this caricature.
By permission of "The New Statesman."

PRINCE SARRAZIN'S FROGS



By
EDGAR JEPSON

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

THE frogs were uncommonly attractive; and as Miss Timmins studied them one by one, sheer delight made her beautiful blue eyes shine brighter and deepened the delicate colour in her cheeks. It was plain to her trained eye that the frogs were the work of three carvers; the three of crystal were the work of one man, the three of bluish agate of a second, the brown agate and the green moss-agate frogs of a third. All three of these carvers were artists; they had the right feeling; but the carver of the brown frog and the green was a genius. Miss Timmins wanted that green frog, and she wanted it badly. It was not as realistic as the others; the artist, abstracting, had given it simpler, more austere lines; it was the essential frog.

But it was not for her. This was a lot which would bring the collectors of Chinese hard stones in a body to the sale next day; and their bids would soar to a height which would make it impossible to get a pleasing profit on it.

With a sigh she turned to the consideration of the other lots, to find that there was one which would suit her very well—three jade amulets. She had a customer for jade amulets. That and two other lots she would buy if they went cheap. She marked her catalogue with the prices to which she would go for them, then returned to the frogs and again studied the green frog, at length, with a loving eye. She left it with a sigh.

At one o'clock next day the sale began with forty lots of Japanese netsuke. Miss Timmins was not interested. She was chiefly concerned about the behaviour of her eyes; they kept turning to the door. She knew really that they were looking for the entry of that good, but exasperating, customer, Lord Scredington, but not for a moment would she admit this to herself. Indeed, the conscious and correct Miss Timmins was annoyed by this behaviour of her eyes; but she could not stop it. Something in her subconsciousness was the cause of it, something in the nature of a Scredington complex perhaps.

She reacted to that cheerful and wicked young Peer in two very different ways: sometimes he seemed a veritable familiar spirit, sometimes he was her detestable *bête noire*. Always that was after he had given her some of his cheek, as she phrased it—called her "Peulah darling," or caught her unaware and snatched a kiss.

Lord Scredington did not come through the door; Bouncer Bosanquet did. A man of forty with a roving black eye, wavy black hair, and a large black moustache, which he was wont to twirl with an air of irresistibility, he was always a bugbear to her. Three years before, when she was sixteen and beginning to take the active part in her father's business, he had taken her under his wing at the sale-rooms, advising her what to buy and what not to buy. At first friendly, he had presently become gallant.

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An astonishingly accomplished teller of the tale, he had filled her girlish mind to the brim with stories about his romantic origin and romantic life, and gone a long way towards taking her girlish fancy. Then, fortunately, he had shamelessly tricked her out of a score of fine Japanese sword-guards she had bought very cheaply, just because they had appealed to her and without knowing anything about them, at a suburban sale. On the top of this shock had come the information that he was a married man with six children. How she had hated him!

The netsuke came to an end and the sale of the lots of hard stones began. Miss Timmins was grieved to observe that prices were running high. But presently she was comforted, for the three jade amulets were knocked down to her for a sum on which she would make a very pleasing profit indeed. Then the eight frogs were put up for sale. She watched the bidding.

Of a sudden she awoke to the fact that not a single collector of hard stones was present. She jerked upright on her chair, thrilling with sudden hope. If a dealer bought the lot, she might yet get the green frog. Few dealers would recognize how much finer it was than the more realistic ones.

The bids ran slowly up to thirty pounds. Then only Bouncer Bosanquet and Huggins, Red Huggins, went on bidding. Miss Timmins thought that Huggins was not really keen on the frogs, but only bidding Bouncer up. He disliked Bouncer, who had tricked him out of a fine collection of amber, heartily; indeed, it was he who had, in his bitterness, conferred the title of "Bouncer" on him.

At Bouncer's bid of thirty-four pounds Huggins shrugged his shoulders and turned away; Bouncer twirled his moustache with a triumphant air and waited for the sound of the hammer.

Miss Timmins had never meant to spend forty pounds at this sale; she had about as much stock as she wanted. But thirty-four pounds for those frogs? No!

She bid thirty-five pounds.

Bouncer came down from his height of satisfaction with a jolt. He scowled at her and bid thirty-six pounds. Miss Timmins nodded. Farringdon said: "Thirty-seven." Bouncer drew himself up with an air and in commanding accents bid thirty-eight pounds. Miss Timmins nodded. "Thirty-nine," said Farringdon.

"Forty!" said Bouncer, quickly.

Miss Timmins's heart leapt in her bosom; from his tone and from his quickness she guessed that that was his limit; indeed, she was sure of it. Farringdon would not give him credit to the amount of sixpence; he had come to the sale with only forty pounds in cash in his pocket. Confidently she bid forty-one pounds. Farringdon knocked the lot down to her.

IN her delight her fingers trembled a little as she took the frogs from the tray the commissionaire set before her. She wrapped them and the jade amulets up, each in a sheet of tissue paper, and put them into her attaché case. Tingling with a pleasing sensation of victory, she left the sale-room. When she reached home she had to wash and polish the green frog before she took her hat off. She found that the fact that it was now her own had destroyed none of its charm for her.

She washed and polished the other frogs, but did not set them in the window. She put them away in a cabinet against the next visit of Lord Scredington, not only because he would give her a better price for them than any other of her customers, but because they would please him very much indeed—always supposing he gave her none of his cheek. If he did, she would tell him at length how beautiful they were and how he would love them, and then sell them to someone else. She had a heart of gold.

The green frog she slipped into the silk pocket in her skirt, in which she was wont to carry a new treasure. She kept putting her hand into that pocket and fondling it.

Late in the afternoon there came into the shop a slim, frail-looking woman of thirty-five, of a pale complexion, with a thin, sharpish nose, a rather prim mouth, but very pleasant blue eyes. From her clothes Miss Timmins perceived that she was an American on her travels, from her accent that she came from a Southern State.

She moved quietly about the shop, examining the objects of art and asking questions about them. She had a precise manner of speech and an uncommonly clear enunciation. Miss Timmins did not think that she would buy anything; she took it that she was picking her brains with a view to improving her own mind. As a rule Miss Timmins was brusque with such customers. But no one with that beautiful green frog in her pocket could be brusque with anyone; she was cool but courteous.

The lady took to her. Indeed, it looked as if she had not found other dealers so civil and was grateful. Presently, apropos of a Ming Bronze, she told Miss Timmins the history of her life. Her name was Calhoun, Anne Calhoun; she had been a school-teacher and had expected to remain a school-teacher till she could work no more; but in the previous year her brother John, who had gone North in 1899, had died and left her fifty thousand dollars. Some of her dearest dreams were coming true.

The story woke in Miss Timmins the keenest sympathy. She, too, had her dear dreams. Had she fifty thousand dollars, most of them would come true.

Anne Calhoun went on to tell her that she had a great ambition. She was resolved to take home with her a really great work of art, to be, apparently, a nucleus of culture in her home town, and on it she proposed to spend five thousand dollars. On the voyage over she had learnt from a fellow-passenger, by whose cultured outlook she had been vastly impressed, that, if she desired to buy a really great work of art, it would have to be Eastern and old; that modern artists, whether of the East or the West, had lost the secret of beauty; that five thousand dollars would go a very little way towards buying the beautiful things made in Europe before that secret was lost—about the end of the fifteenth century; but that great masterpieces of the East were still to be found and bought, by those who searched for them. Evidently her informant had been a purist and a modern of moderns—a most unfortunate adviser for the poor lady to have chanced on.

But Miss Timmins was wholly of his way of thinking; she said, firmly: "He was quite right."

"I'm so glad you think so," said Anne Calhoun, thankfully.

"But such a piece as you want, a really fine big piece, will take a lot of finding," said Miss Timmins. "They don't come over by every steamer."

"I believe I'm on the track of it," said Anne Calhoun, with a note of triumph in her voice. "Yesterday I was at a sale at Christie's, and I happened to be sitting next to a gentleman who was very kind about telling me of the things that were being sold. And after the sale I told him what I have told you; and he told me that he believed he knew of the very thing I wanted."

"He would," said Miss Timmins, with conviction.

"Yes. But it isn't one thing; it's eight things—a collection. And they're not in England; they're in Italy—eight frogs carved in agate and crystal and collected by Prince Sarrazin of Siena. Each frog is the absolute masterpiece of a different artist. The Prince hunted China from end to end for them. Out of the hundreds of frogs of jade and chalcedony and agate and crystal offered to him, he brought back just these eight wonderful masterpieces. It isn't only the frogs themselves; it's the romance of it—the wonderful romance!" She clasped her hands with an air of gentle enthusiasm. "And my friend—I think I may call him my friend—thinks that he could get them for me for five thousand dollars."

"Just five thousand dollars?" said Miss Timmins.

"Yes. And he's actually trying to get them—he cabled to the Prince last night. I had a letter from him this morning saying that he'd done so."

"M'm, what's his name?" said Miss Timmins, who was thinking, and thinking hard.

"I mustn't tell you that," said Anne Calhoun. "The whole matter has to be kept a profound secret."

"It would be," said Miss Timmins, with conviction.

"I oughtn't really to have told you anything about it. But I'm sure the secret is safe with you. The Italian Government won't allow works of art to leave the country, you know," Anne Calhoun added, gravely.

"His initials aren't A.B. by any chance?" said Miss Timmins.

Anne Calhoun's eyes opened wide; and in the hushed voice of immense astonishment she said: "Why, you extraordinary girl! How ever did you guess?"

"I know his style," said Miss Timmins.

An expression of uneasy dismay slowly spread over Anne Calhoun's face; she began: "Why, you don't mean——"

But Miss Timmins had finished her thinking. There would be developments; Albert Bosanquet was not going to lose five thousand dollars without a splendid effort. She was not going to nip that effort in the bud by saying too much. She broke in:—

"I don't mean anything at all. But I tell you what; I'll show you some crystal and agate frogs—quite good ones. You ought to know something about what you're going to buy."

So saying, she went to the cabinet, took out the seven frogs, and set them on the counter. Anne Calhoun, relieved, came to it eagerly; and they went over them one by one, at length, Miss Timmins explaining the quality of each, and doing her best to make clear the differences in the work of the three artists.

Then she said, carelessly: "Do you think you'd know these frogs again if you saw them?"

"I'm certain. I should know every one of them," said Anne Calhoun with immense decision. "They're the sweetest and cutest things I ever saw—and now that you've told me about them so kindly and patiently, I see how beautiful they are. It's hard to believe that Prince Sarrazin's *can* be finer than these."

"They certainly won't be much finer," said Miss Timmins, with dry certainty.

Then she took the green frog from her

pocket and set it beside the brown one, and added: "These two are the real masterpieces, and by the same man. You can hunt through China from end to end, like Prince Sarrazin did, without finding anything better. And I bought these eight frogs at Farringdon's salerooms this morning for forty-one pounds—a little less than two hundred dollars. So you know where you are."

"Only two hundred dollars!" cried Anne Calhoun. "Why—why—I'll buy them from you—just for myself."

Miss Timmins shook her head: "No: I have a customer for them. And I don't think, if I were you, I should say anything to Mr. Bosanquet about having seen them. It would look a little distrustful, you know."

"I certainly sha'n't," said Anne Calhoun, quickly. "And I'm so glad you didn't mean anything when you said you knew his style."

Presently Anne Calhoun departed, after thanking Miss Timmins warmly for her kindness and saying that she would come again.

At the shop door Miss Timmins said, casually: "I should like to know how you get on about Prince Sarrazin's frogs."

"You shall. I'll come round and tell you," said Anne Calhoun, gratefully.

"And if you should ever see these frogs of mine again, don't say you saw them here. Just say they were in Farringdon's sale this morning, Tuesday the twenty-second, and fetched forty-one pounds."

"I will—I will," said Anne Calhoun, and walked down the street.

Miss Timmins looked after her and liked her. Anne was a gentle, simple creature; and under Miss Timmins's sophistication her heart was simple as well as of gold. She was pleased to be helping her.

She was also going to enjoy the procedure of Mr. Bosanquet. Anne Calhoun was going to be the subject of an intensive campaign. The business of getting those frogs from Italy and their romantic owner would be worked up till he had got her half crazy about them. But for the luck of her chancing on Miss Timmins in an amiable mood he would have swindled her with ease.

But what a fool the man was! The frogs he had seen on view at Farringdon's the morning before had suggested this ingenious swindle; he must have them; yet he had gone to the sale with only forty pounds in his pocket, when there hadn't been one chance in a hundred of getting them for that sum. He had not got them; he had yet to get them.

"Why, you extraordinary girl! How ever did you guess?"

AT ten o'clock next morning he came into the shop with a lordly air and, though unshaven, diffused about it an agreeable odour of beer. He twirled his moustache as he came.

He said in a lordly voice: "Ah, Miss Timmins, good morning. I've come on a little matter of business—those, ah, frogs you bought at Farringdon's. Do you care to part with them—at a reasonable profit?"

"Not particularly," said Miss Timmins, in about the least enthusiastic voice that ever issued from human lips.

Mr. Bosanquet gave his moustache another twirl and in an even more lordly voice said: "Ah, I'll give you five pounds for your bargain."

"You won't," said Miss Timmins with gentle decision.

A slight, rather surprised frown furrowed Mr. Bosanquet's narrow brow; and he said: "Well, seven pounds ten, then."

"Nor seven pounds ten," said Miss Timmins in the same gentle voice.

The frown furrowed Mr. Bosanquet's brow more deeply. He raised his offer only to have it refused. He raised it again and yet again with the same result. Then, with a rather excessive bitterness, he asked Miss Timmins what she did want for the frogs.

In accents both dulcet and honeyed Miss Timmins said: "Well, you know very well, Mr. Bosanquet, that that was the finest lot of hard stone frogs that ever came into an English sale-room. I should think that it took the man who collected them ten years or so to get them; and they're not to be got again. I want two hundred pounds for them."

Mr. Bosanquet gasped; his fine black eyes assumed a sudden resemblance to the portholes of a small ship; he murmured thickly and in accents of one who cannot believe his ears: "The girl's mad! Two hundred pounds! Nonsense! Such a price was never heard of!"

"You've just heard it," Miss Timmins reminded him sweetly; and even more sweetly she added: "And it's the only price you will hear."

It was the only price he did hear. But it was a long while before he could bring himself to believe that it was the only price he was going to hear. Then he went raging away.

Miss Timmins believed that he had gone to turn London upside down till he found two hundred pounds.

But she had to have eight frogs. She was not going to sell the green frog to Mr. Bosanquet. She drew her father from the parlour, in which he was studying with profound pleasure the last number of the *Anglo-Israelite*, and left him in charge of the shop. She went round to a friendly dealer, who had bought an agate frog at Christie's a few weeks before; he might still have it. He had; he let her have it for six pounds. It was not to be compared with any of the eight frogs she had; but it would serve her purpose.

She was sure that Mr. Bosanquet would quickly dig up the two hundred pounds, and she wished Lord Scredington to see the frogs, for they would delight him. She rang him up and invited him to come to see them.

He said: "Darling, I'll fly to you at once—on the wings of love!"

She slapped the receiver back, scowling. She *did* dislike him; there was no doubt about it.

But somehow, when, tall, slim, debonair, and smiling, he came into the shop, she did not find herself disliking him nearly as much as she ought. She showed him the frogs and they delighted him. He said that he must have them.

"No: I can't let you have them," she said. "I've promised them to someone else—if he can find the money."

He banged both fists down on the counter hard and cried loudly: "I knew it! I knew it! I knew, though I spoke so sweetly when you rang me up, that you'd thought out some ingenious way of lacerating my feelings. You knew quite well that, if I didn't have that brown frog, life would never be the same again!"

"Yes, I knew you'd want that brown frog," she said in callous accents. "But Bouncer Bosanquet has gone to dig up two hundred pounds to buy the eight."

He cried out at the idea of the frogs going to that ruffian. But when she told him of the swindle afoot, he agreed that he must step aside and let that ruffian get his lesson.

Then he laughed and added: "But two hundred! It's quite clear that your father is perfectly right and you *are* one of the lost tribes of Israel—by far the most dangerous of them, too."

Then he grew anxious and said that when Bosanquet's bubble burst he might cut up uncommonly rough. Miss Timmins said she did not care how rough he cut up.

"Of course you don't," said Lord Scredington. "But all the same I'd better be about when it does burst, to take him on for you. You'd like to have me about the shop for two or three days."

"I should *not*," said Miss Timmins, with immense decision.

"If you were not so beautiful and so sweet, I should tell you that you were a little beast," said Lord Scredington, coldly.

He did not leave her for some time, and contrived to say many charming things to her without ruffling her sensibilities, and before he went he induced her to promise to let him know when Mr. Bosanquet's bubble was due to burst.

THE next morning Mr. Bosanquet entered the shop with a companion.

"Ah, good morning, Miss Timmins," said Mr. Bosanquet, almost in the rich voice of a satrap. "My brother—this is Miss Timmins, Hector—my brother and I have decided to buy those frogs—if you care to take a hundred and fifty for them."

"I don't," said Miss Timmins, surveying him and his brother with cold disfavour.

Mr. Bosanquet scowled very darkly and muttered something about grasping dispositions; then he said: "Let's have a look at them."

"Why shouldn't we have a look at the money first?" said Miss Timmins, with cold sweetness. "This is a cash transaction."

The brothers hesitated, Albert furious, Hector startled, but evidently not greatly surprised.

Then Albert said with splendid haughtiness and a magnificent twirl of his moustache: "My brother is not used to having his financial stability doubted."

"He will be, if he goes into many deals with you," said Miss Timmins in a pleasant, conversational tone.

Albert ground his teeth and glared murder. Then he recovered himself, and displayed with a flourish seven ten-pound notes. Hector hesitated, then he displayed thirteen ten-pound notes.

Miss Timmins opened the cabinet and set out the frogs.

Albert scanned them with an aloof and lofty air; then he started and said sharply: "But there was a green one among them!"

"Yes: but it hadn't enough work in it for a real collector. This one makes up the set better," said Miss Timmins, calmly, patting the eighth frog.

Satisfied, Albert accepted the explanation with a grunt.

But Hector exclaimed in a tone of affright: "'Ere—I say, Bertie—they're very small. Is this all we git for two 'undred pound?"

Neither his accent nor his aitches matched his name.

"Why, they're life-size," said Albert.

"I thought they'd be bigger nor that," said Hector, disconsolately.

"You don't understand these things," snapped his brother; then he said to Miss Timmins, in lordly accents: "We'll take them."

With a finely prodigal air he pushed his seven notes across the counter. After a little hesitation Hector pushed his thirteen across with the air of one pushing his life-blood. Miss Timmins wrote the receipt and handed it to Hector. Albert drew the frogs towards him.

"Stop!" said Miss Timmins, imperiously. "You're not going to put beautiful things like that into your dirty pocket!"

Albert stopped, glaring. He drew out a handkerchief about a fortnight old and wiped his brow. Miss Timmins wrapped each frog in tissue paper, put them in a cardboard box, handed them to Hector, and said: "There you are."

"Yes, we *are*," said Albert, in a tone of deep meaning, as he drew himself up to his full height and fiercely twirled his moustache. "And now I'm going to tell you that the price you made me pay for those frogs is an imposition—a gross imposition—and to a fellow-dealer, too!"

"You wouldn't give it unless you were going to make a jolly good profit," said Miss Timmins, quite unruffled. "And you may be a dealer, but you're not a fellow-dealer. I'm square, and you're a stupid crook, you know."

Mr. Bosanquet gasped and blinked painfully. Then he snorted and said in a terrible voice: "You seem to think, my girl, that because you're a young woman you can make libellous statements about me with impunity. You never made a greater mistake in your life. You'll hear from my solicitor about this."

"Shall I?" said Miss Timmins, sweetly. "When?"

"By the first post to-morrow morning," said Mr. Bosanquet, still terribly.

"Right," said Miss Timmins, cheerfully. "Tell him not to miss the last post to-night."

Mr. Bosanquet did not say that he would tell him, he did not say that he would not; he left loftily. Hector shambled out after him, hugging the box of frogs with a pained air. Their size still troubled him; he felt that, at the price, they should at least be as large as guinea-pigs. Miss Timmins gazed upon the departing brothers with the quiet, filling satisfaction of one who is not only about to get a good deal of her own back, but is also already on velvet to the tune of one hundred and fifty-nine pounds.

She did not see that she could do more than she was doing for Anne Calhoun; she felt that for her to confront Mr. Bosanquet, outraged in his deepest instincts by being found out, would go a long way to prevent her being finally swindled over some other five-thousand-dollar masterpiece. She awaited the opening of the Bosanquet campaign in a pleased expectancy.

SHE had not long to wait. At four-thirty, as she had promised, Anne Calhoun came rather jubilant with a telegram she had just received. It ran :—

" Agent cables Prince Sarrazin consents to consider your offer.—Bosanquet."

After reading it with a queer smile, Miss Timmins again awoke doubt in her mind by telling her to take care of it.

The first post next morning did not bring Miss Timmins a letter from Mr. Bosanquet's solicitor, but it brought Anne Calhoun a letter from Mr. Bosanquet himself. He began it with his usual courtliness, " Dear Lady," and wrote that he considered the mere fact that Prince Sarrazin had consented to consider her offer very promising indeed ; that it was very fortunate that he happened to be a personal friend of the Prince, for he was convinced that had his agent in Siena brought that offer from anyone not vouched for by him, that proud and haughty Royalty would have rejected it with the cold scorn of the Italian aristocrat.

Miss Timmins again knew the style ; but she did not say so.

" But you haven't made any offer. He's getting these frogs on approval, isn't he ? " she said.

Anne said that she had certainly not made any offer, but merely accepted Mr. Bosanquet's suggestion that he should get the frogs for her to see. Miss Timmins made her write to him then and there that she had made no offer, and would not buy the frogs unless she liked them. She made her make a copy of this letter and initialled it. Then she warned her earnestly against entertaining high expectations of the frogs, because she was nearly sure that, when she saw them, she would not pay five thousand dollars for them.

That afternoon Anne Calhoun brought another telegram. The campaign was well under way. It ran :—

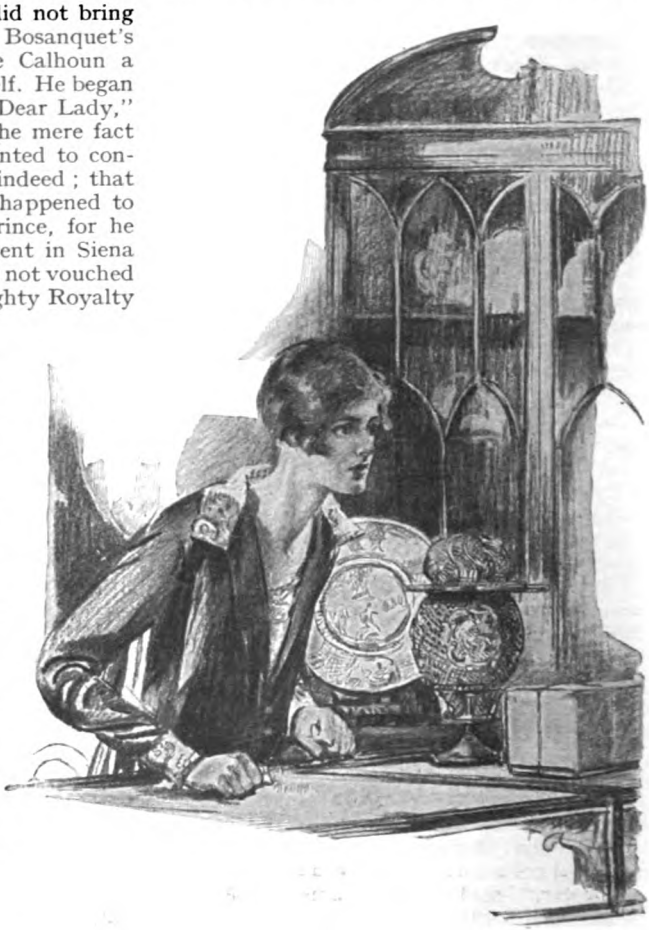
" Prince Sarrazin still considering your offer. Agent very hopeful.—Bosanquet."

The enthusiastic fellow must that morning have received Anne Calhoun's letter putting on record the fact that she had made no offer, but evidently he considered it unimportant.

Next morning came a great advance, a telegram which ran :—

" Prince Sarrazin accepts your offer.—Bosanquet."

Miss Timmins had expected him to call, thrilling with enthusiasm, on Anne Calhoun. But he did not. She took it that he kept away from her because he did not wish to go into the matter of whether she had definitely offered five thousand dollars for the frogs. Next morning there was a slight



withdrawal, a letter in which he said that things had so far gone very well—marvellously, but Anne was not to feel sure even now of getting the frogs, for, though he had made such arrangements as had made failure practically impossible, they might fail to get past the Italian Custom-house. It increased Anne's excitement.

The next morning there was another advance, a telegram :—

" Objects safely out of Italy ; most gratifying. —Bosanquet."

Anne was immensely excited.

Next morning came a letter of unrestrained jubilation. He congratulated her on the splendid luck she was having, and declared that it had been ordained from the beginning of time that these unsurpassable masterpieces were to be hers.

In the afternoon came a telegram :—

" *Frogs arrived Paris.—Bosanquet.*"

That evening came another :—

" *Agent crossing to-night ; frogs will be yours at eleven a.m. to-morrow.—Bosanquet.*"

Anne was thrilled ; in her excitement she had a poor night.

The next morning came a letter in which he congratulated her on the successful termination of an affair of the first importance and her extraordinary luck in chancing upon the one man in England who could carry it through in record time. In a postscript he added that, owing doubtless to the fact that the Italian nobility had so often been tricked by swindlers, the Prince had made the stipulation that he was only to deliver the frogs for cash down, and it would facilitate matters if she had the five thousand dollars ready at her hotel when he brought them to her.

Anne Calhoun came with this letter to Miss Timmins at the very height of excitement. The cumulative effect of the telegrams and letters was that she had formed the impression that Europe had been standing still to watch the passage of these unsurpassable masterpieces from Prince Sarrazin to herself. They had come to seem to her cheap at five thousand dollars ; she had called on her way to her bank to get the money.

As she looked at her excited face and

"You seem to think, my girl, that because you're a young woman you can make libellous statements about me with impunity. You'll hear from my solicitor about this."

listened to her jubilant and enthusiastic words, Miss Timmins's mind misgave her: Anne seemed fairly hypnotized, and Bosanquet might yet bluff or bully the five thousand dollars out of her. She must be more open with her.

"Look here: you mustn't have that five thousand dollars at the hotel," she said, firmly. "It won't be safe. I'm certain that this business is a swindle—that if there is any Prince Sarrazin, these won't be his frogs."

Anne Calhoun, startled and astounded, stared at her with her mouth open.

"I wish I could be somewhere handy when that beast brings them," added Miss Timmins, frowning as she cudgelled her brains for a way of being at hand but unseen. "But if he sees me, it will spoil everything. It'll soften the jolt, I mean."

Anne protested that Mr. Bosanquet could not be trying to swindle her; that, in view of his telegrams and letters, it was impossible. Miss Timmins shrugged her shoulders, and said no more. Then, weakening, Anne said that she had taken the sitting-room into which her bedroom opened, and Miss Timmins could overhear the whole interview from that bedroom.

"I will," said Miss Timmins. "What's the number of the sitting-room?"

Anne told her. At once she rang up Lord Scredington, found that he was out, and left a message that the frogs would be delivered at eleven o'clock that morning at room one hundred and twenty-seven, the Bastable Hotel, Bedford Square. Then she made the excited Anne walk all the way back to the hotel, by way of calming her nerves.

At ten-fifty-five Miss Timmins went into the bedroom.

At ten-fifty-six the brothers Bosanquet, clad in their best and wearing also the pleased and excited air of men engaged in an important and profitable undertaking, began to mount the stairs to room one hundred and twenty-seven. Hector still carried the frogs.

Half-way up the stairs the brothers paused to take breath, and Albert said, bitterly: "Look here, Ned: you're here by no wish of mine. I've told you twenty times I can do the job much better without you——"

"And I've told you, Bertie, oftener nor that, that I'm not goin' to lose sight of you till I've got my share of the thousand quid. You've let me down too hoften for me to take any chances," said Hector, coldly stubborn.

"Well, all I say is, don't you go and spoil everything by opening your mouth. You can't bear in mind for two seconds after you've opened it that you're Hector Bosanquet and not any longer Edward Binns—so keep it shut and don't give the whole show away," said Albert, fiercely; and he resumed the ascent.

At ten-fifty-nine Lord Scredington entered the lobby of the hotel, asked for Miss Calhoun, room one hundred and twenty-seven, and began to mount the stairs leisurely. He could not, he thought, be needed for at least five minutes.

ALBERT BOSANQUET knocked firmly on the door of room one hundred and twenty-seven and, smiling triumphantly, entered with his most imposing air. Anne Calhoun rose; he strode to her majestically, took her hand, squeezed it, smiling upon her with loyal affection, and said in a hushed, impressive voice:—

"The luckiest woman in England! How are you?"

He loosed her hand, waved his towards Hector, and said, splendidly: "My brother Hector—the bearer of the masterpieces!"

Hector presented a flabby, clammy hand; Anne shook it and said that she was pleased to meet him. Albert took the box from his reluctant hands, set it on the table, rapped it with his knuckles, and said, impressively:—

"A king's ransom." He beamed gallantly on Anne Calhoun, and added: "You lucky woman—as fortunate as you must be attractive to those who really know you."

His manner, his air, his loyal eyes, his rich, jubilant voice, all combined to sweep from Anne Calhoun's mind the base suspicions with which Miss Timmins had filled it.

And the box: the brown paper in which it was wrapped was stamped in half-a-dozen places with blue, red, and black stamps—evidently the stamps of the Custom-houses it had passed through. They settled the matter.

Talking quickly and enthusiastically about her astonishing luck, Mr. Bosanquet cut the string, pulled off the paper, and opened the box. He took out a frog wrapped in tissue-paper, unwrapped it, and handed it to her.

"Yours at last!" he said, with a magnificent sigh of relief and satisfaction.

Anne Calhoun, awed by the greatness of the event, took the frog with trembling fingers—the treasure of a Prince! She looked at it with eyes that for some seconds could not see it. Then they cleared and saw it with a growing distinctness. They opened wider and wider; she gasped faintly and nearly dropped the masterpiece; then her parted lips closed and slowly set in a thin, straight line.

In two seconds Mr. Bosanquet was all over that frog, explaining its quality and its beauty eloquently, with passion dithyrambic; but he did not bring home its beauty

to Anne Calhoun with nearly the force that the quieter Miss Timmins had done the first time she saw it ; his panegyric was not born of the same sincere delight in it. Besides, other feelings, not excited by the frog itself, entered into Anne Calhoun's second study of it.

The second frog he handed to her removed any faint hope she might have had that the first frog of Prince Sarrazin was a replica of the frog of Miss Timmins. The second was the brown frog on which Miss Timmins had dwelt longest. Anne's eyes began to shine with a queer light. It was not the light of pleasure.

As Mr. Bosanquet took each frog from the box he said, with rich reverence : " Another unsurpassed masterpiece of another unsurpassed master," and again spread himself. He spread himself over those frogs as he had never spread himself over a work of art before ; there had never been so much to gain by it ; never had his fancy been more fertile, his invention richer. He saw that he had Anne Calhoun dazed, spellbound, hypnotized. She was swallowing everything he told her. What a man he was ! And how he despised her ! The ideal mug !

SHE said not a word till she set down the eighth frog on the table ; indeed, she could hardly have done so, since Mr. Bosanquet was saying everything.

Then, with a curious dry distinctness, she said : " But I've seen these frogs before. They were sold at Farringdon's sale-rooms on Tuesday, the twenty-second—for two hundred dollars."

At the sound of her voice Miss Timmins knew that she had been wrong in supposing that she could ever be bluffed out of five thousand, or even fifteen, dollars by Bouncer Bosanquet.

Slowly his flabbergasted brain grasped Anne Calhoun's meaning. For twenty seconds or longer he sat paralysed.

In his immense emotion Hector, crouching forward in his chair with his eyes starting from his head, assumed the very appearance of a frog himself ; and a thin whine issued from his twitching lips : " 'E's 'ad me agyne ! "

Albert recovered ; he rose to his feet with a reassuring smile, his honest eyes limpid with a noble candour, and said in accents ringing with veracity : " You are making a mistake, dear lady, a quite natural mistake. You do not understand the great Chinese tradition. For thousands of years they have been carving frogs, father and son and grandson, generation after generation, without departing a millimetre from the tradition. The greatest artist sticks to it ; only experts like Prince Sarrazin and myself recognize his greatness. The frogs you saw at Farringdon's may have been like these, very like them, perhaps—I did not see them myself ; but I am certain—I would stake my reputation as a connoisseur on it—they were very inferior."

He beamed upon her, frankly setting her right, reassuring.

" They are the same frogs ; and you can take them away," said Anne Calhoun.

Mr. Bosanquet evidently could not believe his ears ; he looked hurt and amazed ; then his face slowly darkened and grew terrible ; he appeared to swell ; he said in a cold, stern, scornful voice : " I see your game, my good woman. I might have known that these magnificent masterpieces would not appeal to the crude taste of a benighted American female. But it is no use your trying to get out of your bargain. I might allow you to trick me ; but I will never allow you to trick my friend Prince Sarrazin ! The five thousand dollars, woman ! The five thousand dollars at once ! "

He looked magnificent ; he felt magnificent—righteously menacing—compelling —irresistible ; he rapped the table in a very threatening manner. Then the bedroom door opened, and out came Miss Timmins, smiling unpleasantly.

She said : " That will be about enough from you, Bosanquet. Clear out."

His almost majestic wrath fell from his face like a mask ; he dithered. Then slowly real fury took possession of him and convulsed his features.

He shouted : " Now I know where I am ! A conspiracy ! You two women have conspired together to get two hundred pounds from me by a trick ! I'm going straight to Scotland Yard ! I'll jail the pair of you ! "

Miss Timmins laughed. There was a knock at the door and Lord Scredington stood on the threshold. He had been leaning patiently against the door-post till he heard the voice of Miss Timmins. The Bouncer's shout informed him that the time for intervention had come.

He bowed to Miss Calhoun and said : " Please forgive my intrusion. But I was told that there was a small sale of gold bricks going on here, and I thought that there might be one for me."

Mr. Bosanquet dropped back on to a chair with one grunt of despair and plunged into speechless gloom.

Hector interposed feverishly ; in carneying accents he said : " 'Ere, 'ere—why all this ill-feeling about a trifle like this ? It's only business. Suppose we drop all this talk about five thousand dollars an' come to brass tacks. What about two 'undred and fifty pound for the eight frogs ? What if they ain't Prince Sarrazin's, they're first-class

frogs; the best as ever come over. What about two 'undred an' fifty pound?"

"What about fifty, without the two hundred?" said Miss Timmins, heartlessly.

"I wouldn't give you a nickel for the eight!" said Anne Calhoun, fiercely. "I wouldn't have anything to do with you! You're just two loathsome crooks!"

"Now you two fellows; out you go before you're helped!" said Lord Scredington.

They seemed to have heard tones like his before. Hector hastily scooped the frogs into the box; Albert rose feebly, made a feeble effort to stalk loftily to the door, feebly twirling his moustache.

As he followed him out Hector gazed round on those unsympathetic faces and whined tearfully: "'E's 'ad me agyne. 'E always 'as me."

Lord Scredington rather cut short Anne Calhoun's thanks for his intervention at the awkward moment, and hurried away. He caught up the brothers Bosanquet. Anne began to thank Miss Timmins. Miss Timmins would not hear of being thanked. She said that she had long wanted to score off that rogue Albert Bosanquet, and she had done it. But Anne insisted on thanking her at length, and insisted that she must help her, at a pleasing fee, to find the genuine masterpiece. They went straight out to look for it. Later they lunched at the Savoy.

Miss Timmins returned to the shop in a pleasant temper. She had not been back long when in came Lord Scredington.

With an air of immense triumph, and

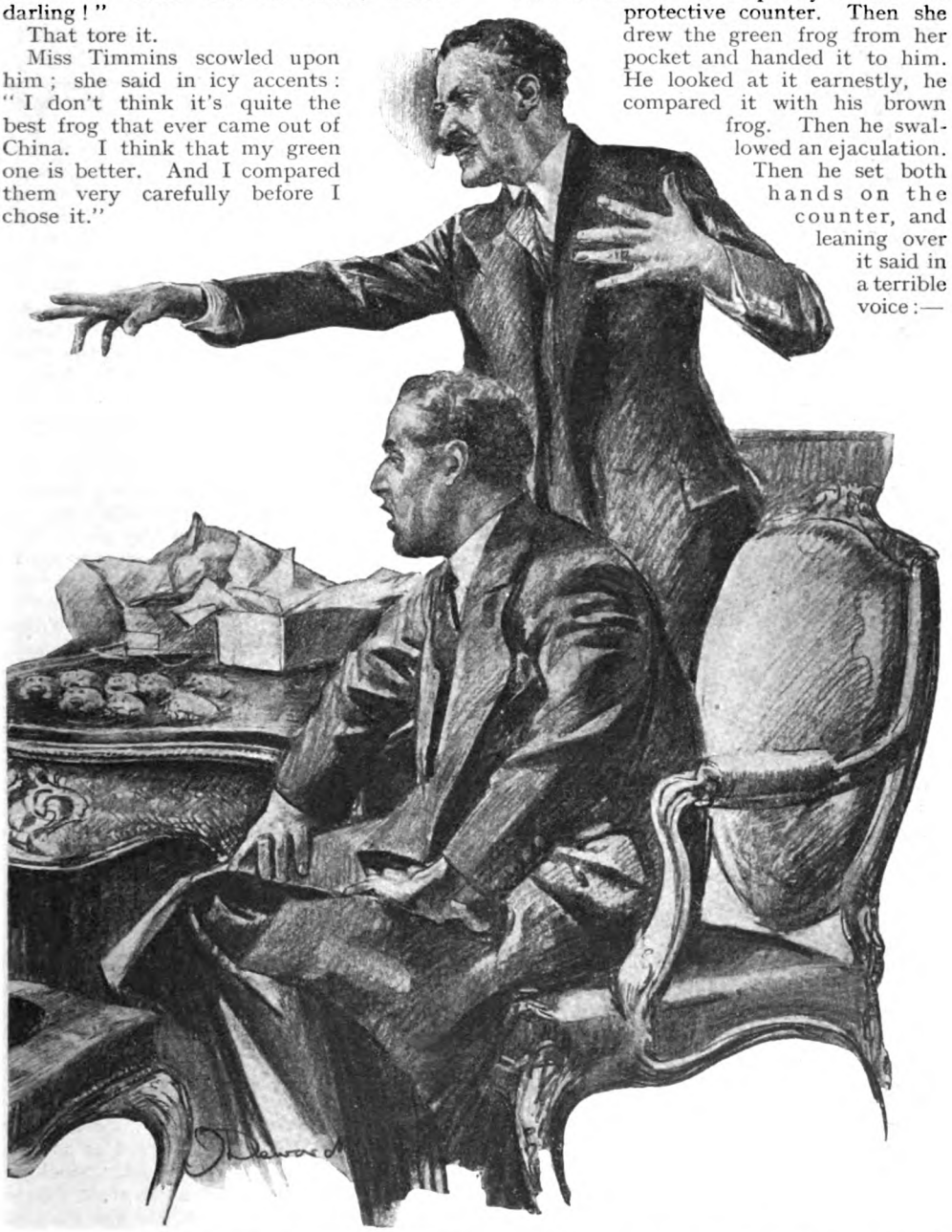
holding it out for her to see, he said: "I've got the brown frog—the finest frog that ever came out of China, Beulah darling!"

That tore it.

Miss Timmins scowled upon him; she said in icy accents: "I don't think it's quite the best frog that ever came out of China. I think that my green one is better. And I compared them very carefully before I chose it."

"Your green one?" he said sharply, taken aback.

Miss Timmins moved quietly behind the protective counter. Then she drew the green frog from her pocket and handed it to him. He looked at it earnestly, he compared it with his brown frog. Then he swallowed an ejaculation. Then he set both hands on the counter, and leaning over it said in a terrible voice:—



"A conspiracy!" he shouted. "You two women have conspired together to get two hundred pounds from me by a trick! I'm going straight to Scotland Yard."

"One of these days I shall come round with a special licence and drag you round to the nearest registrar's and marry you—not just because I adore you so passionately, but I know it's the only way of getting that green frog!"

The Wine of the Country

By LYNN DOYLE

Illustrated by TOM COTTERELL

YOUNG Robert Hastings, nephew of Mr. Hastings, of the Hall, was the youngest boss-man in a big linen firm in Belfast—I suppose because his father was the eldest—an' accordin' to himself he worked like a nigger all the year round. But all the same he found time to take a good deal of interest in horse-racin', an' was never short of a good tip for a friend. An' when him an' a chum of his in the racin' line came to Ballygullion on a holiday an' told us to put our shirts on a French horse for the Lincoln, we did what we were told. St. Somethin'-or-other was the horse's name; I disremember it exactly; but it should ha' been St. Swithin, for there was a power of wet followed his victory.

Wee Mr. MacDermott, the schoolmaster, was a great crony of Robert Hastings', an' put his whole quarter's salary on the tip. Of course he made as much money as filled his ould tall-hat, an' when Mr. Hastings proposed that the Master should go over to France with him an' his friend later on an' see a race called the Grand Pree he was a good deal shook in his mind.

" It'll be takin' a great risk," sez he at the last, " for I know Michael Cassidy's whisky, an' goodness knows what chemicals they'll foist on me if I go stravaguin' out into the world; but if you'll pay for Pat Murphy here to come as my vally, an'll fetch as much whisky with the party as will keep us from dyin' of drouth for a week, the invasion of France is as good as settled."

" It's a bargain, Master," sez Mr. Hastings. " Let Pat come an' vally us all. If he has as steady a hand with a razor as he has on a plough he'll be worth his expenses many a mornin' before we get back. But as for whisky, if you're goin' to France you're goin' to France; an' you may either drink what's there or stay at home."

" Have your own way of it," sez the Master. " But you'll be disappointed in me; for how you expect me to maintain the national reputation for hilarity on a pop an' a mouthful or two of gas-bubbles is clean beyond me."

An' troth he was right. He smuggled half a pint of Michael's best through the Customs an' warmed our hearts with a sup of punch in the train; but that was the last spark of cheerfulness he showed. When we got to Paris he was the ruin of the party. Mr. Hastings tried him with every colour of drink in the whole rainbow; but white, red, blue, or green, they were all the same to the Master. There was one liquor, called absinthe, that raised a bit of interest in his mind. He give in that if there was any way of gettin' it into your system bar drinkin' it the stuff had points; but his heart didn't warm to it an' he fell into melancholy again.

Mr. Hastings was terribly disappointed in him; but he didn't lose heart.

" We're not beat yet," sez he. " We're all goin' out to-night to dine with our Paris agent. We'll take a private room, an' with the help of his experience, an' a drop of brandy in the champagne, it's a queer thing if we don't get a stave out of the Master yet."

An' troth, so we did, an' more than we bargained for.

The Frenchman wasn't much bigger than the Master, but with more of a corporation on him; an' no wonder either, for he was near as particular about his vittles as the Master was about his drink. A sporty-lookin' wee fellow he was, an' took a great fancy to the Master from the first. He was a polite man, too, or, 'deed, maybe it was only artfulness; but anyway, when he gathered that the Master was a bit of a scholar—an' the wee man, for the honour of Ireland, slapped a mouthful of Latin at him in the very first course—he would call him nothin' but Professor. The Master was well pleased,

an' when the champagne wine was produced was very polite about it, an' took it down without a murmur, though by the look of his face I've a notion that himself an' his stomach had their own private opinion between themselves.

By dint of emptyin' his glass about four times to the Frenchman's one he managed to keep about level with him in the point of sobriety, an' the two of them grew greater every minit. The Master told him the chief rivers an' mountain ranges in Ireland, puttin' a couple of thousand feet or so extra on all the highest peaks, an' sinnin' his soul most lamentable about the population of the principal towns. Then he give him a cast over arithmetic an' geometry, an' wrote him out on the tablecloth a new method he had invented of extractin' the cube root.

I WILL say the French people is by-ordinary polite. That Frenchman sat there as grave as an undertaker, an' followed the whole story as if he had been in the Fourth Class. But, troth, it was dull enough work for the rest of us, an' after a while the Master begun to feel things hangin' fire a bit himself.

"Here, Pat," sez he to me, "I suppose there's no chance of gettin' a real drink; but do you cut the piano wires off two or three bottles of that temperance concoction an' reach me a tumbler instead of this bird-bath, an' I'll see if we can't give the party a bit of an Irish twist."

He filled himself up a tumbler of champagne wine, drank it off, an' then poured another into himself. The Frenchman by this time was purty well oiled, even if he was drinkin' only champagne; an' I suppose it was too much for his politeness. He threw up his hands an' drew a terrible disgusted face.

"Oh, Professor," he groans out, "it is barbarous, and in a man of education like you. I tell you it is barbarous. A glorious wine, and you treat it with contempt. You Irishmen are savages. You are not fit to drink anything but—what do you call him?—ah, yes, viskee."

"Oh, blessed Paul," sez the Master, "do you hear the little aborigine blasphemin' the natural beverage of the Irish race? Tell me, mosoo," sez he to him, "did you ever have a drink of whisky in your life?"

"Viskee!" sez the Frenchman. "Yes, I have drunk him—as liqueur. Bah!" he sez, drawin' a face, an' pretendin' to spit out.

"Poor benighted crathur," sez the Master. "I suppose he has got a thimbleful of fusil oil some night, after a feed of frogs an' mice, an' he thinks he has drunk whisky. Listen," sez he; "if ye had two glasses of whisky in ye—aye, even of Michael Cassidy's five-year-old, an' that's only what you might call whisky ordinaire—ye would be bouncin' along the streets of Paris like an india-rubber ball. Ye could speel the Eiffel Tower like a monkey goin' up the bars of a cage. Ye could go out into the streets of Paris an' take the whole population two at a time an' knock their skulls together. Don't be shakin' your head," sez he. "A man that's as good company as you are on a bottle or two of grape-juice has the makin's of a President in him if he could only stimulate his natural gifts with a drop of the real Simon Pure. Tell me, Mr. Hastings," sez the wee man, that by this time was gettin' warmed up with his own talk; "ye say this place has the finest cellar in Europe; would there be no chance of their having a jar of whisky hid in some dark corner or another?"

An', sure enough, after the divil's own bargein' an' shruggin' of shoulders an' wavin' of hands a bottle was brought in at last that the boss of the place swore was whisky.

The Master pulled the cork an' took a very dubious sniff.

"Well, well," sez he; "the cause is good. Whatever this is we'll drink it. I'll pour out first for our friend."

He pours out a stiff half-tumbler an' hands it to the Frenchman. But the Frenchman had fallen into a kind of doze durin' the time they were huntin' for the whisky. When the glass was put into his hand he looked at it stupidly for a minit or two, an' just as the Master had his own glass filled an' was reachin' for the water, he puts it to his head an' empties the whisky down neat. Mr. Hastings made a glam to stop him; but he was too late. The Frenchman stood up, gasped a minit or two like a gold-fish, gripped himself in the waistcoat with both hands, an' then with one yell he leaped through the door, down the stairs, an' away up the street like a madman.

The Master put down his own glass—empty, I may tell you—coughed a couple of times, shook his head, an' made for the door too.

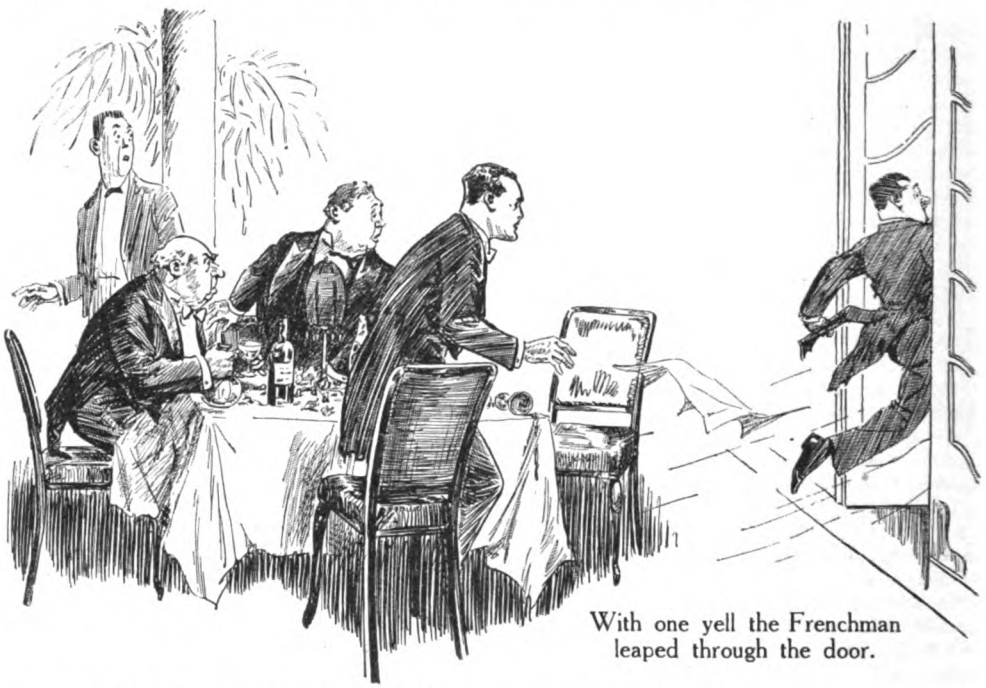
"After him, boys," sez he. "He's poisoned. I'm poisoned myself; but it'll take me longer to die."

An' down the stairs an' away along the street goes the Master too, with the three of us after him, hot-foot.

I very soon took up with the Master, for, as ye may guess, he hadn't been leadin' just the kind of life to make any great sprinter; but, corporation an' all, we couldn't make a yard on the Frenchman, an' him yellin' half his wind away as he ran.

At the end of the first street the Master give in.

"Stop, Pat," sez he, gaspin'. "I'm done. We'll waste no more breath on him. His goose is cooked. No human system bar an Irishman's could stand that preparation more than half an hour. It would take the rust off a boiler. Let him go. We'll find him in the Morgue to-morrow mornin'."



With one yell the Frenchman leaped through the door.

"But what are we goin' to do, Master dear?" sez I. "We've lost the other two, an' we're lost ourselves. We'll never get home the night."

"Who wants to go home," sez the Master, "at this time of the night, an' with money in our pockets? Let us keep movin', though, till I get that poison out of my system. It's worse than snake-bite."

"I don't much like the neighbourhood we're in," sez I.

"What's the matter with the neighbourhood?" sez the wee man. "It's not just as swanky as the place we've left, but it's all the liker home; an' they can't keep worse drink, anyway. An' look at the fun is goin' on. What's this buildin' in front of us, that's running up such a gas bill?"

"If it's a circus," sez I, "the man that owns it is a bad speller."

"To be a scholar of my own, Pat, you're poorly enough educated," sez the Master. "That's how they spell 'circus' in French. We'll go in," sez he. "It's the first homely bit of entertainment I've come on since I left Ballygullion. What's this?" sez he, lookin' at a bill on the walls. "Are my eyes deceivin' me or is the proprietor's name MacMahon? Stand by me, Pat, an' we'll go an' call on him. My grand-aunt Jane was a MacMahon before she was married. Maybe he'll be a friend. An' at the worst he's sure to have a drop of real whisky on the premises."

I done my best to stop him, for I seen that the glass of bad whisky he had put into him was just gettin' well to work; but I might as well have saved my breath. In he goes an' marches up as bold as brass to a big fat man in uniform, an' says somethin' to him in French. By the look of the Master you'd ha' thought he owned half Paris, an' the tall hat helped him to carry it off. Before I knowed where I was him an' I were followin' the man in uniform up the stairs.

"Don't be surprised if ye see me by-ordinary civil to the boss," whispers the Master. "I'm goin' to pretend to take him for one of the MacMahons of Ballymacrum. I'll let on to be a bit Frenchified myself, just to put him at his ease. If I was sure of my breath after that glass of sulphuric acid I had at the dinner, I would kiss him."

When we were shown into the room, here was a dapper-lookin' little fellow writin' away at a desk, an' troth if there was any Irish blood in him it was far back, for he looked as French as a waiter. He was all surprised an' not too well pleased when

he seen us, but before he had time to say anythin' the Master had him by both hands.

"I'd have known ye anywhere," sez the Master, shakin' the two hands at the one time. "Sure you're the very spit of your Uncle Joe. Pour me out a sup of whisky till I give ye the news of the whole family."

The dapper little man jumped to his feet with somethin' that even in French didn't sound like a blessin', run over to a speakin'-tube, an' yelled down it.

"Didn't I tell you he was a hearty wee fellow, Pat?" sez the Master. "The whisky'll be here in a minit. I couldn't just make out what he said, but I hope it was the French for 'John Jameson.'"

"I hope it wasn't the French for throwin' two men down the stairs," sez I; "for I didn't like the sound of it."

With that a couple of rough-lookin' diamonds of men dashes into the room, bones me by the arm, an' starts pullin' me over to the door.

"Hould on, boys," sez I, strugglin'; "for the love of ould Ireland, hould on. The pair of us'll walk down; an' if my friend can't walk I'll carry him."

The man that had me by the right arm let go, an' stares at me.

"You're never Irish?" sez he, in a very strong Belfast accent.

"Aye, am I," sez I, "an' a Co. Down man to boot. For the love of mercy get us out of this or my friend and me'll be massacred."

"Divil a massacre," sez the boy. "I'm in charge of the performin' elephant, an' on a day like this, when he's in a bad temper, sure I own the whole show. I'll speak to the boss, though, an' tell him you're my cousins. Wait," sez he, lookin' at the Master, that by this time was fast asleep in his chair; "is your friend Irish?"

"He is," sez I, "a schoolmaster."

"He doesn't look dry enough to be a schoolmaster," sez the fellow.

"He's not dry," sez I, "or, anyway, he oughtn't to be. But if you can get us out of this place with our lives, an' can connect us with a drop of good Irish whisky, I wouldn't be surprised if he'd be glad of a sup in the mornin'."

"Come on, the two of ye," sez the lad. "If you can put up the money I can put up the whisky. An' it *will* be whisky. If I hadn't spent the best part of my life learnin' to know good whisky from bad I wouldn't be groomin' a performin' elephant this day."

BEFORE five minits the Master an' I was settled in a wee snug beside the elephant's stable, the Master just moistenin' his lips with his tongue till our new chum, Hughey Larkin, would turn up with a bottle of whisky he'd been sent for.

"It's borne in on me, Pat," sez the wee Master, "that I'm just enterin' on the beginnin's of a very pleasant an' satisfyin' spree. I observe in this man Larkin a touch of that real divil-may-care-let-to-morrow-look-after-itself spirit that lifts the mere consumin' of drink into the glorious. Ah, my tight fellow," sez he, as Larkin came in with the bottle, "what is it you have got? Fifteen-year-old pot-still? Have ye glasses? Now get us about two or three tablespoonfuls of water, an' fetch in the elephant, an' the night is as good as started."

"Fetch in the elephant, is it?" sez Larkin, fillin' himself out about two glasses in a tumbler. "Divil a fear of me. He's just finished his performance, an' he's as cross as a tinker's wife. If ye went near him till he has finished his supper he'd eat ye like a bundle of carrots."

"What performance exactly does the noble an' intelligent animal do for his livin'?" sez the Master.

"Well, first of all he does a kind of general handy-man work," sez Larkin, "pilin' up logs, an' buildin' bricks an' that sort of thing, till the public is tired of it; then he goes through a kind of a school with letters an' figures on cards, an' at the end of all he sits down with a napkin round his neck an' ates his dinner. Twelve loaves an' six bottles of wine he puts into him at every performance."

"Ye don't mean to say that ye give the poor innocent beast wine!" sez the Master, settin' down his glass in the middle of a drink.

"There's people says it's a waste, I'll give in," sez Larkin.

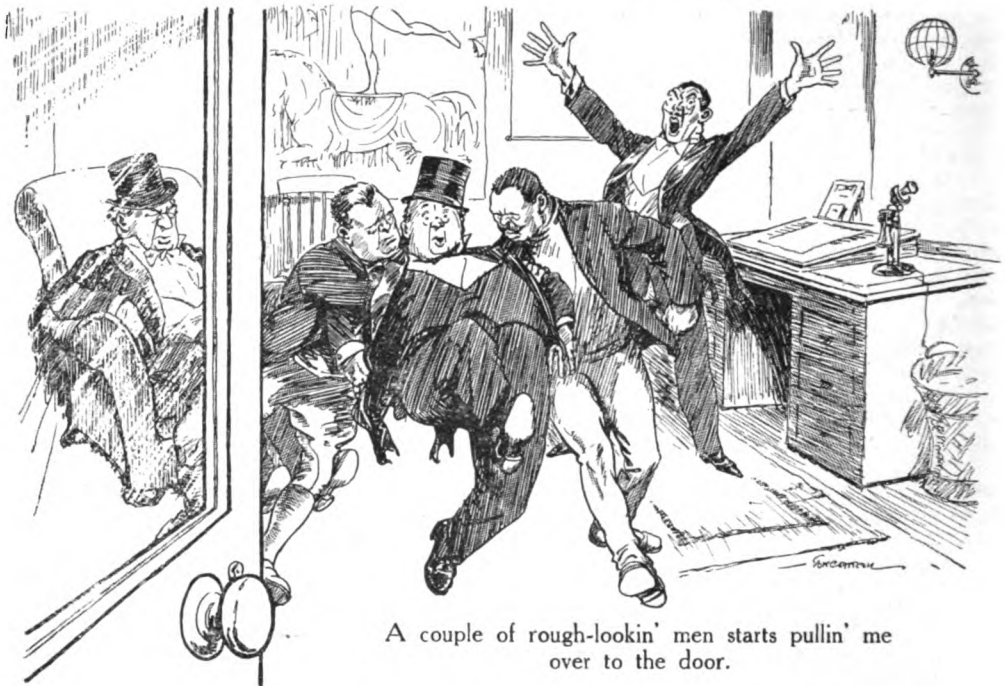
"It's worse than waste," sez the Master, "it's downright unkindness. Here's a poor benighted animal fresh from the jungles of Africa, that can't tell you his wants, or put his hand in his pocket an' go out an' buy a drink for himself, an' ye compel him to pour a splash of dyed vinegar into his inside every night before he goes to bed. It's no wonder he's ill-tempered. He'll get nightmare some time an' rise up an' pull the whole place about your ears. It's only the other night that I riz up in my sleep after drinkin' wine an' threw the jug an' basin down the well of the hotel lift."

"Aw, he gets plenty of pullin' before he goes to his bed," sez Larkin. "The last turn he does is to take the end of a rope an' pull twenty of the strongest men in the audience all over the place."

"On wine?" sez the Master.

"No," sez Larkin. "If it's any relief to your feelin's I may tell ye they're only wine bottles with water in them."

"Water!" sez the Master. "That's worse. You've shown yourself a friend in need to Pat Murphy, here, an' myself; but



A couple of rough-lookin' men starts pullin' me over to the door.

I misdoubt you're a stony-hearted crathur to the brute creation."

"Sure it's his natural drink I'm givin' him," sez Larkin.

"An' if you had fetched us down here this evenin' an' give Pat an' me our natural drink, would there have been a feature in your face this minit ?" sez the Master. "If I pay for a bottle of whisky for the poor animal to-morrow night will ye give it to him ?"

"I'll see him in hell first," sez Larkin. "Forbye the waste of good drink I daren't do it. He's carnaptious enough as it is. Why, man, if he had a bottle of whisky in him he'd go off an' pull down the Eiffel Tower. Here," sez he, splittin' the balance of the whisky among the three tumblers, "drink that down, the two of ye, an' I'll put yez in a cab an' send yez home—an' if you'll come round in the mornin', Mr. MacDermott, I'll get ye them two cases of whisky ye were talkin' about, an' help ye to drink them into the bargain."

"I'm concerned about that elephant, Pat," sez the wee man, as we were drivin' back to the hotel. "Forbye that he's gettin' no sort of fair play in that den of blood-suckers, it comes into my head that there's a glorious opportunity bein' lost of testin' the virtues of the national drink of the Irish people on a really large scale. I've made one or two experiments myself in the effects of whisky on the animal kingdom, but the results haven't been exactly conclusive. I would say, though, that there's great possibilities in the case of an elephant. Well, well," sez he, half-noddin' over, "the night air of Paris is very heavy. I declare I'm half asleep. To-morrow is a new day, an' there's a couple of cases of whisky comin', an' we must just be content with experimentin' on ourselves. But, all the same," sez he, mutterin' to himself as his head fell forward an' the tall hat rolled on the floor of the cab, "it's a pity about that elephant."

I thought the Grand Pree next day would drive all thought of both the elephant an' the whisky out of the Master's head ; but not a bit of it.

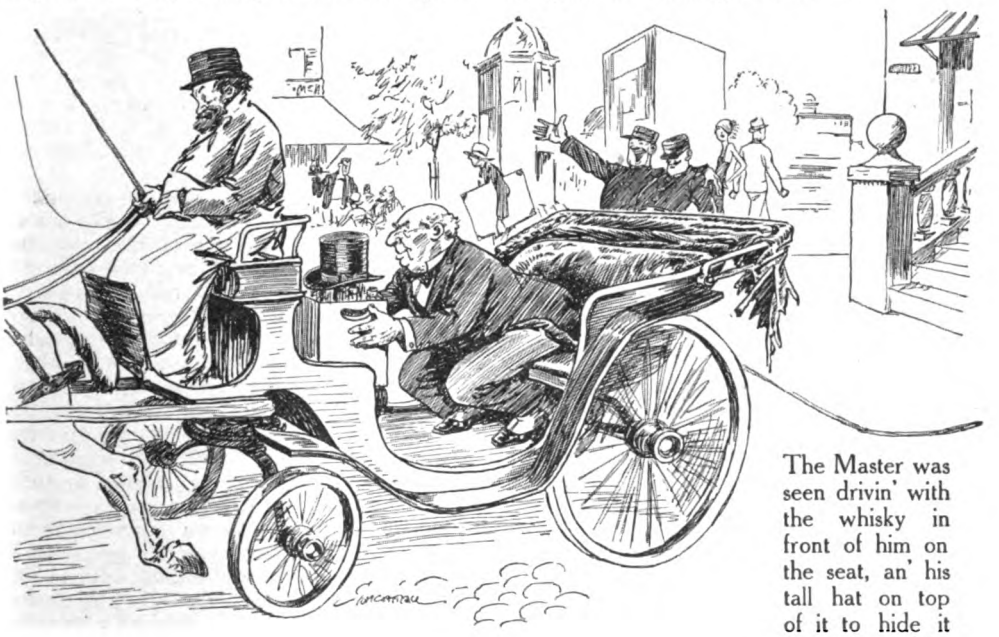
When the mornin' came, he would hear no word of goin' to the Grand Pree at all.

"The whisky is to be at the circus by one o'clock," sez he, "an' I'm goin' to be there to meet it. I daren't leave it an' Larkin in each other's company a whole afternoon. Everyone to his taste, as the man said when he kissed the cow. You three go to the races, an' I'll look after the business end of things. I can go to races when I get home, but not if I die of thirst here."

There was nothin' to be done but give in. Off the three of us went to the races, an' backed four winners, an' come home

in the evenin' in great heart, lamentin' among ourselves about the big day the Master had missed. But when we got back to the hotel, we weren't just so sure about it.

It seems that between three an' four o'clock one of them open French cabs turned into the hotel yard, with the Master in the dickey, drivin', an' not makin' such bad weather of it either, barrin' that he left part of the hood of the vehicle on the spikes of the railin's as he turned in. The cab-driver was sittin' in the body, lollin' back like my lord, an' that full that he couldn't even tell his name, let alone his number. About half an hour afterwards two johnny-darms turned up, all out of breath after runnin' across half Paris, an' ready to cut the head off anybody from the butler to the cook. The Master an' the whisky had gone up to their bedroom long before this, so they sent the two polis out for his cab-driver in French, an' when at long last they got one of the hotel servants that understood English, all they could get out of the Master was that he was goin' to remove his whisky to a place of safety. They needn't waste their time talkin' to him, the cab he wanted an' the cab he would have ; so they laid hold of the driver, that by this time had swallowed about two gallons of coffee, an' was brave an' sober, an' the last thing anybody had seen of the Master was him drivin' out of the yard in the cab, with the balance of the whisky in front of him on the seat, an' his tall hat on top of it to hide it from the police. When we heard all the story, Mr. Hastings blamed the proprietor of the hotel very sore for lettin' the wee man away in such a state, but, troth, the proprietor was that glad to see the last of him in any state at all that if it hadn't been a busy day he'd ha' gone out to sing a Te Deum.



The Master was seen drivin' with the whisky in front of him on the seat, an' his tall hat on top of it to hide it from the police.

up after them, an' when they come down again in half an hour's time, as far as I can gather all they would be able to report when they got to the police-station was a heavy fog. About five o'clock two inspectors arrived. They paid no attention to the cab-driver at all, but asked to be showed straight up to the Master's room, an' when they come back again, an' the Master with them, nothin' would do them but they'd kiss him good-bye on the steps of the hotel. The Master sat down in a wee orange-tree in the porch an' begun to call

Anyway, there was no use goin' to look for the Master that night.

" He'll turn up in the mornin', very dry," sez Mr. Hastings, " an' we'll have all the less trouble gettin' him to leave the place for home. The very sound of Michael Cassidy's name'll make him break into a run."

But in the mornin' there was no word of him, an' at one o'clock there was still no word. So we made up our minds we'd have to go away to the circus an' hunt him out.

When we got there, a decent fellow of a groom told us that Larkin an' the Master had got on a fearful spree the night before an' nearly made hay of the whole establishment. When the proprietor wanted to turn them out, the pair of them offered to fight the entire French nation, an' the elephant took their side, an' when his Indian trainer was sent for threw him into the glass-case among the serpents. After that, Larkin an' the Master barricaded themselves up in the elephant's stable, with the balance of the whisky, an' in the mornin' about ten the three of them had marched out an' up the street, an' nobody had seen them since. However, he told us not to be uneasy; for that Larkin had gone off like that before, an' the elephant was a sensible beast, an' would likely bring him back about performin'-time.

So we wandered about the town till well on in the afternoon; and when we went back to the circus we heard that Larkin an' the elephant had turned up, both sober an' both very cross; but there was no news of the Master to be got at all. We sent for Larkin, but all the word we got was that he was sleepin' between the elephant's legs, an' that it was as much as anybody's life was worth to wake him.

"The Master's gone back to the hotel," sez Mr. Hastings. "We'll find him there."

But I thought there was a shifty look about the boy that had brought out the message about Larkin, so I said I'd wait for the evenin' performance, an' let the other two go back to the hotel.

A very dismal business it was for me, the same performance, sittin' there with people laughin' an' sniggerin' all round me, an' me not understandin' one word, except when one fellow would hit another a slap in the face or would fall off his horse an' near kill the ring-master.

AT long last out came the elephant. Larkin wasn't with him, of course, bein' only groom, an' I think the wee yellow, monkey-faced fellow that put him through his paces would have been glad to be somewhere else himself; for every time he give the elephant a rap with his iron stick the baste let a Gr-r-umph! out of him that would have frightened ye.

But there's no doubt he was clever. He rolled logs, an' he bent iron bars, an' piled up bricks, an' spelt out words with cards better than I've seen wee fellows as far as the Third Class do it. Then he sat down on his hind-end, an' they tied a napkin round his neck, an' set down the six wine-bottles of water an' the twelve loaves before him just as Larkin had said. But when he begun on his dinner, things started to go wrong. The first bottle of water he drank he shook his head an' give a very wicked Gr-r-umph! an' the second the same. An' after that he quit takin' water an' bread time about, but started gobblin' one bottle of water up after another, leavin' the loaves there. The wee Indian chap done his best with him, but it was no use; an' when he tried to put a loaf down the brute's throat by force the elephant threw the other eleven loaves at the ring-master, an' only missed him twice.

Then all at once he got quiet, an' after goin' over the whole six bottles again an' suckin' the last drop out of them, he stood there like a lamb, swingin' his trunk back an' forward with a twinkle in his eye as if he was laughin' at everybody.

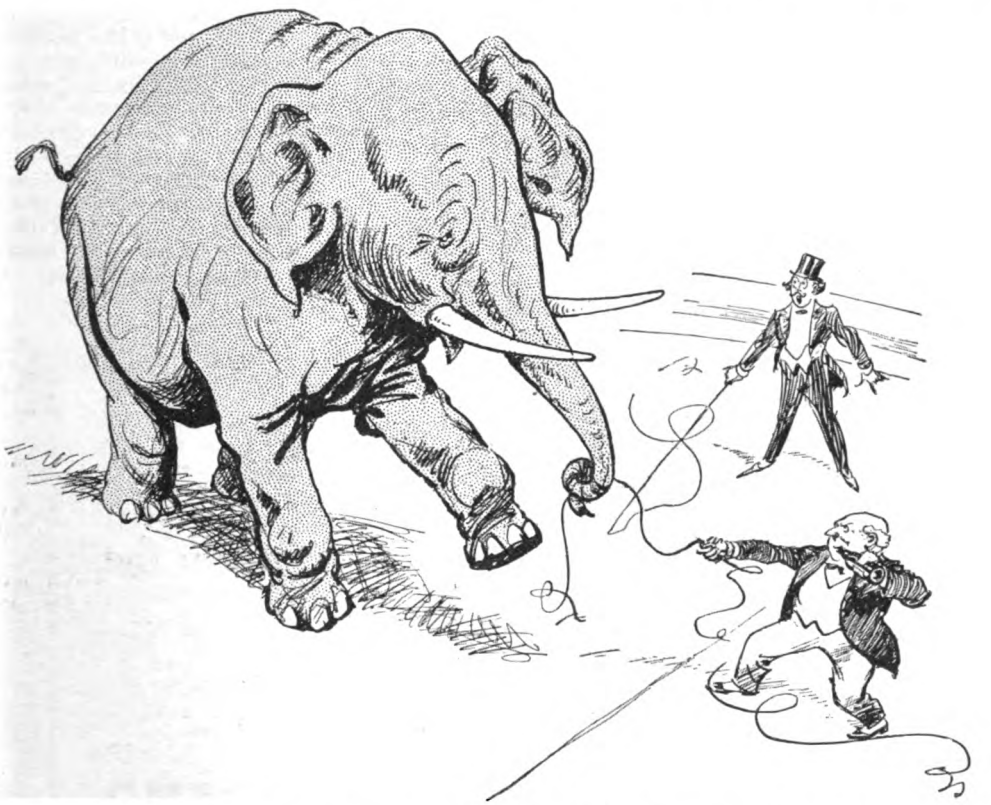
When the wee Hindu fellow seen that the beast was quieted down, out he comes with a big man in uniform walkin' behind him, an' when they were right in the middle of the ring he hands the big man a paper, an' after a great blare of bugles from the band the big man reads off somethin' in a very loud voice. Divil a word of it I understood, I need hardly tell ye; but I knowed from Larkin what it was all about. It was the challenge from the circus people for twenty of the strongest men in the audience to pull a tug-of-war again the elephant. Ten francs apiece they were to get if the elephant crossed the line; an' I may tell you the circus people wasn't riskin' much at that.

I suppose by this time people had a purty good notion to that effect; for nobody came forward at all. The band give another blare, an' the big fellow read the notice again, an' still nobody budged. The people in the ring looked a bit bamboozled, an' the audience begun to laugh an' jeer, when here, just as the band put the bugles to their mouths again, who marches out as bold as brass from the elephant's entrance, with the tall hat well cocked over his eye, but the wee Master himself. He walked over to the table where the money was lyin', as steady as a rock, barrin' that he stepped a thought high when he was crossin' the rope, an' slappin' down a wad of notes: "There's your money covered," sez he. "I'll pull him myself."

The audience understood no more of what he said than I did of the big man's proclamation; but they took it in all at once, an' such a yellin', an' cheerin', an' cat-callin' riz as ye never heard in your life before. As for me, I just sat there gapin', speechless. The people in the ring was more bewildered than ever, an' waved their hands, an' jabbered an' went on like a pack of monkeys. But the ring-master wasn't slow, an' seen that a tug-of-war between the Master an' the

elephant would be a big take, so he clears them all out of the ring an' signed to his men to put the rope in its place. I say signed, for when the crowd seen the tug-of-war was goin' to come off they raised a roar of laughin' an' yellin' that would ha' beat a foghorn to drown. As for me, the only clear notion in my mind was that if I did bump up again the Master I must disown him at all costs.

Gr-r-umph! reverses engines, an' starts walkin' toward the Master, the wee man doin' his best to haul in the slack. When the elephant was well across the line the Master lets a Hooh! out of him, an' runnin' over to the table stuffs the notes into his breeches pocket. Next minit the elephant was on top of him. I closed my eyes, an' then opened them again just to see the finish of an old friend. Most of the men-kind in the audience sat tight an' held their breath, but some of the weemin set up a very dismal screechin'.



All at once he pulls a bottle of whisky out of his tail-pocket an' puts it to his head. The tug-of-war was over that minit.

The master an' the elephant took up their stands at each end of the rope, an' picked it up; an' in a minit the place was as silent as death. The truth is I think everybody was puzzled, an' anxious to make out what trick was in the business.

The rope tightened up, the elephant backed away slowly, an' the Master begun to skate along the ground towards the chalk line in the middle. All at once he looses hold of the rope with one hand, pulls a ten-glass bottle of whisky out of his tail-pocket, an' puts it to his head. The tug-of-war was over that minit. The elephant gives one

The elephant seized the wee man by the waistband of his trousers (I always said Dan Moloney was the great tailor) an' swingin' him up over his head lowered him on to his back as careful as if he was an egg-shell. Then, after fumblin' round him a minit, he quietly pulls the bottle of whisky out of the Master's pocket, pours the contents down his own throat, an' shambles off to his stable. But he mustn't have been as steady in his head as he was in his feet, for when

he come to the door leading out of the circus, instead of stoopin' down to give the Master head-room, the way he'd done for the Hindu when he come in, he just marched straight on. The lintel of the door took the Master in the chest. As the elephant went on the Master slid along his back; an' when the elephant's back ended the Master sat seven feet lower down, on the ground. It was a mercy the bottle was out of his pocket, an' the rest of him not glass. By the time I had pushed my way through the crowd they had got the coat an' hat on him an' he was bravely come-to. How we reached the street door I can't tell you. I know I got that much clappin' on the back that I'd rather have fell off the elephant.

"Will ye tell me what on earth divilment ye were up to with that elephant, Master?" sez I, when the cab had started. "For the proceedin's of this night bother me altogether."

"Don't be usin' such expressions about what after all was only kindness to a dumb animal," sez the Master, sittin' up. "I gave the poor benighted brute about half a bottle of whisky after his long walk this afternoon, an' he showed such an intelligent appreciation of the virtues of our national consolation that I split three more bottles among his refreshment at the performance. An' then, Mr. Murphy," sez the wee man, "it seemed to me that there was no use my wastin' my substance among this people of vinegar drinkers, so I took advantage of the little partiality I had created in the leathery bosom of the inhabitant of the jungle to get my money back. It's a pity about Larkin, though," sez he. "He has trouble before him. If they offer my friend the elephant cold water again he'll pull the place down. An', troth, I wouldn't fault him. If I had a throat as long as that hose-pipe of a trunk of his an' could taste my liquor for near a quarter of a mile before it got the length of my stomach, I'd do the same myself."

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

Next month we shall commence the publication of

A NEW SERIES OF

SHERLOCK HOLMES

STORIES,

the title of the first being

"The Adventure of The Three Gables."

The Girl Who Was Not Ethel

By

J. J. BELL

Illustrated by
P. B. HICKLING

THE most wonderful thing about spring in London is the response of London's humanity. A profoundly sentimental philosopher has declared that the Strand is at its best and brightest on a fine April morning, between the hours of, say, eight-thirty and nine-thirty; in other words, when the pavements are in blossom with the business girls bound for their offices; and even elderly, hard-headed, commercial gentlemen, seated at the upper corner windows of a certain old-established hostelry overlooking that thoroughfare, have been observed, on such a morning, to neglect their breakfasts to peep down under their newspapers at the aforesaid pavements.

But on this particular and particularly fine April morning we are dealing not with sentimental philosophers or hard-headed gentlemen, but with a young man—a well-featured, well-dressed, well-set-up young man, fair and of a fresh colour suggesting a recent sea voyage—who at nine-fifteen emerged from the Hotel Cecil courtyard and turned in the direction of Charing Cross. He could have given no reason for his turning in that direction, for he had neither appointment nor errand in view; he was simply a restless young man out for a stroll before breakfast, and our sentimental philosopher would probably have called his turning West an Act of Fate, for had he turned East the thing could hardly have happened.

A girl in fawn—a colour which distinguished her less than she distinguished it—was walking smartly eastwards, when our young man, who had not taken ten steps from the Cecil entrance, stopped in front of her, so abruptly that they nearly collided, and in a voice of joyous astonishment tempered with awe exclaimed:—

"Ethel!"

To say that the girl's astonishment equalled his would be no more than the bare truth; but it was not in the least joyous, nor did it contain the slightest hint of awe. To lips like hers one does not apply the word "gaped"; still, it must be said that they opened to their utmost, while a pair of dark eyes flashed a gleam of the most unmistakable indignation.

A breathless moment for both, and then the pretty mouth closed on the curt and cruel word—

"Pig!"

With a look that brought midwinter into the midst of spring, she stepped aside and was gone.

Dazed and scarlet, our young man stood still till a hurrying suit-case-laden pedestrian jostled him aside, and he then drifted helplessly across the pavement, coming to rest at a window into which he gazed, without recognizing that it belonged to the *parfumerie* of the celebrated Monsieur Rimmel.

A few yards away, her passage beyond the Cecil entrance blocked by out-coming cars held up by the street traffic, the girl glanced back, and her expression was more of compunction than of anger, or apprehension. For an instant she wondered whether the entirely discomfited-looking young man at the perfumery window could really be he who, a minute ago, had so confidently and

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blithely addressed her on the pavement. Yet she knew it was he, and at the sight of his dejection she made up her mind. Her act may have been unusual, but so, sometimes, is an act of justice.

With a touch of June in her April colouring she turned and stepped up to the window of Monsieur Rimmel. With a quiet dignity she said :—

"I believe I was rude just now, and I quite understand now that you made a mistake."

The young man, as one who could scarce believe his ears, regarded her gratefully.

"It's awfully good of you," he said, "and it was mad of me; but in the excitement of suddenly seeing you I forgot that you couldn't possibly know who I was."

At his words a little frown of puzzlement gathered between her brows.

"I am Dick Armstrong," he proceeded, "but, of course, I should never have called you 'Ethel'—but then, you see, I don't know your other name, and I was so thrilled at discovering you in London that——" At her small insistent gesture he stopped short.

"Your name is altogether strange to me," she said, "and my name is certainly not Ethel. And now——"

"Not Ethel?"

The sheer dismay of it stayed her going. No really nice girl could have incontinently left a young man in such honest distress as Dick Armstrong's appeared to be then.

"It would seem that I have a double," she said, more brightly than she felt. "And I hope you may find her soon—h'm!—even though you don't know her other name."

He was gazing at her in a fashion that was decidedly embarrassing, and trying to get a grip on himself.

"You must think my behaviour very extraordinary," he said at last, "but this is the disappointment of my life. And it still seems impossible that you should not be Ethel. Please have patience and tell me—have you a twin sister called Ethel?"

"I have no sister at all."

"No sister! Well, you must have a cousin who resembles——"

"Not even an aunt called Ethel," she said, unable to prevent a smile, which, however, showed sympathy as well as amusement. "But really"—suddenly sober—"I must be going."

"Thank you for being so kind about it," he returned. "I—I suppose we shall not meet again?"

Her manner became a trifle haughty. "It is unlikely," she said, hesitated a moment, and added: "Good-bye."

Apparently there was no more to be said. With a sadly humorous smile he raised his hat and answered :—

"Good-bye—Miss Not Ethel."

He watched the trim, quick-moving fawn figure till it was lost in the pavement traffic, and went slowly back to the hotel.

IN the entrance-hall he came upon a heavily-built, heavily-moustached man, with a good-humoured countenance, who said :—

"Well, now that you've had your walk, what about breakfast?"

"You go in, Murray. I'll join you in a minute. I want to get something from my room first," Dick replied, and hurried to the lift.

Murray, whose other name was Colvert, glanced after him curiously.

In his room Dick unlocked one of his suitcases, took out a writing-case, and went through its contents till he came to a folded card, which being opened disclosed the photograph, head and shoulders, of a girl.

For quite a long time he studied it. "'Tisn't possible," he said to himself at last, "that such a girl would tell such a lie. And yet——"

With a rueful wag of the head he closed the card, put it in his pocket, and went down to rejoin his friend and partner. These two were prospectors who, after nearly three years in the wilds of Canada, had "struck it rich," and were now home to consult with certain financiers with a view to a company's flotation. They had arrived in London on the previous evening, and, presumably in order to make up for past privations, had decided to "do themselves well" for a week or so at the Cecil.

Dick found his friend "tucking in," but there is nothing infectious about a good appetite, and before long Murray Colvert, looking across the small table, was saying :—

"What's the matter with the grub, Dick? Looks as if you had been filling up on cheap snacks in the Strand. No need for that now, you know. You and I can afford the best. Waiter!—some more of that sole."

"When you're less ravenous, Murray, I'll have something to tell you," said Dick.

"Tell it now. My ears aren't occupied."

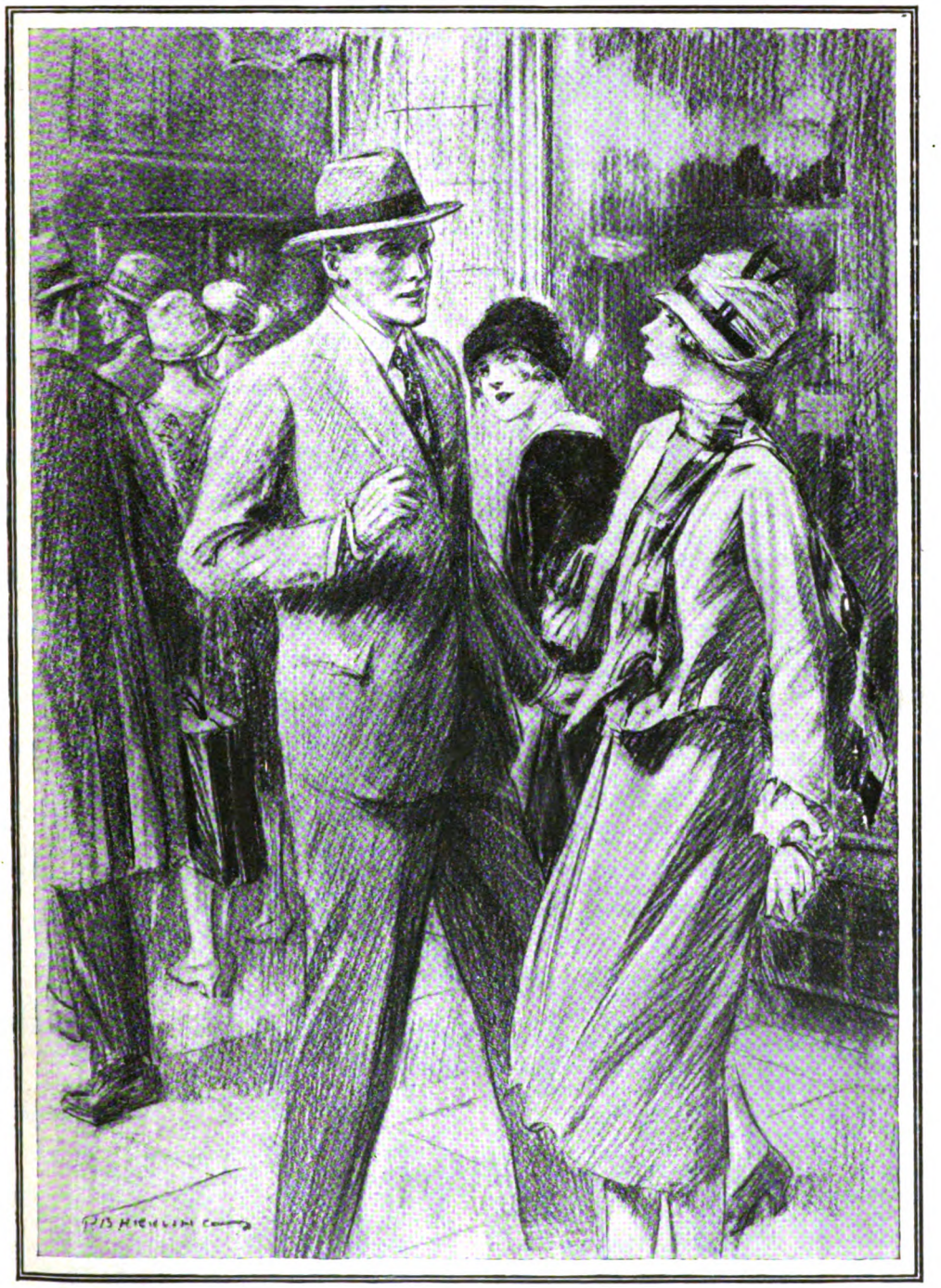
"No, but all the rest of you is. Go on with your gluttony. You'll understand presently why I can't keep pace with you."

"Seedy, old man?" asked Murray, kindly, between bites.

"Fire away and get it over," the younger man answered, rising. "Sorry, but I can't sit still here. You'll find me in the lounge."

And in a secluded corner of the lounge Murray duly found him, the photograph in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

"So that's it! Can't let it alone—eh? And you've been living on it for the last eight months!" said the big man, seating himself. "Nice sort of preparation for our



A breathless moment for both, and then the pretty mouth closed on the curt and cruel word—"Pig!"

interview with the big financiers an hour hence! Put it away and pull yourself together, Dicky, my lad, and we'll rehearse our little speeches."

"I wish you would take in hand the whole business," returned Dick. "I'm no good. I'm out of gear. I—I got knocked out in the Strand, Murray, fairly knocked out."

Murray paused in the act of lighting a cigar, looking hard at his friend. "Better put it into plain English, old man," he said. "What happened in the Strand? Couldn't have been anything to do with that." He indicated the photograph, then dropped the match and wrung his scorched fingers.

"On the contrary—everything to do with this," our young man replied. "I saw her in the Strand, and she—she wasn't Ethel!"

Murray stared, scratched his head; and muttered: "Say it again, if you don't mind."

"I tell you, I saw Ethel in the Strand—and it wasn't her."

"Really! Then who was Ethel, if Ethel wasn't her? Tell me that!"

"Don't be funny about it, Murray. I feel as if the world were falling to pieces!"

"Don't let it go till we get our mine floated," said Murray. "But, seriously, what exactly happened to you in the Strand? At first I could not help thinking that something must have fallen on your head, but now——"

"Listen, Murray! I came face to face with Ethel, and it was not Ethel. That's exactly what happened to me in the Strand."

"I see." The big man lit his cigar. "Well, now, in the first place, how did you know it was Ethel; and in the second place, how do you know it was *not* Ethel?"

"I knew it was Ethel because no one but she could have been the subject of this photograph. I know it was not Ethel—well, because she told me she was not Ethel."

"She told you! Then you spoke to her?"

"I was so certain she was Ethel."

"This beats the band!" said Murray, throwing himself back in his chair. "Not quite twelve hours in London, and in trouble already! We come over to London, you and I, to negotiate a deal on which our whole futures depend, and on the very first morning, at, or about, the unseemly hour of nine-thirty, you, my lad, wander into the Strand and address a lady whom you have never met——"

"Drop the chaff, please, Murray. You'd have done the same yourself if——"

"Nonsense! Do I look like a chap who would fall in love with a girl's photograph?"

"Well, perhaps you don't. You've had the opportunity with this one." Dick folded up the card, unfolded it for a final look, refolded it, and put it in his breast pocket. He sighed and proceeded to brush some cigarette ash from his trousers.

"May I ask," Murray inquired, "what, if anything, the lady said when you addressed her. I do her the credit to assume that she was pretty angry."

"She would be pretty anyway," returned the hapless Richard absently.

"I should have said 'very indignant,'" Murray remarked, with a pitying smile.

"She was—at first."

"And what did she say? Come, out with it, Dick."

"I'll admit she called me a pig," the hapless one answered, "but she was awfully kind to me afterwards—she really was, Murray."

"Must be a member of the S.P.C.A.," Murray observed. "Do teil me the rest."

THE rest was not so difficult to tell, and Dick told it coherently enough, finishing up with, "But she'll always be Ethel to me, old man."

"It didn't occur to you, I suppose, that she might be Ethel after all," said Murray, solemnly, "but suffering from loss of memory?"

"Oh, get out!" was the weary retort. "I've got to accept her denial, whether I like it or not. The whole thing is a miserable mystery. Anyway, I can do nothing till my sister comes home, next week."

"I wonder it didn't occur to you to produce the photo, since you're so certain about the resemblance," said Murray.

"I hadn't it with me then. But what would have been the good? Let's say no more about it, Murray." And with the air of one to whom all seems lost, Dick took out a fresh cigarette and lit it.

"Look here," said his friend, with sudden earnestness. "Promise me that you will give your whole mind to our business of to-day, and I'll give you a tip for to-morrow."

"My dear old chap," answered Dick, contritely, "I'm an ass to go on like this. You can reckon on my attention to business from this moment."

"Good! Now here's my tip. With that photo in your pocket, go out to-morrow morning and waylay her——"

"She'd be frightfully annoyed if I spoke to her again. Oh, I'm sure of that!"

"Risk it, Dicky! You want to put yourself right with her, and you are jolly well entitled to do so. If the photo is half as like her as you say, it should put you right on the spot. Besides, the situation may interest her—I'm almost certain it will—and thereby lead to the better acquaintance which you greatly desire——"

"How do you know I desire——?"

" Because, even to my defective intelligence in such matters, it's plain that you have already transferred your affections from that photo to this girl——"

" But she is not Ethel ! "

"—— to this girl who is not Ethel. Well, that's that ! And now "—Murray produced a sheaf of folded documents—" let's go over all our figures once more."

ON the following morning, from nine-fifteen to ten, our young man admired —with one eye—the wares of Monsieur Rimmel, and disconsolate returned to the hotel and his starving partner.

" Perhaps she's not in business after all," he said. " Yesterday I assumed she was making for an office, merely from the fact of her being in the Strand at such an hour."

" Possibly she was a bit earlier this morning. You had better start at nine to-morrow. . . . Gosh, what a small helping of porridge ! "

On the morrow Dick went out at nine, only to come in an hour later, more disconsolate than ever. " It's all over. I shall never see her again ! "

" Never say die ! " replied his friend. " To-morrow you will try the other side of the Strand."

" What !—do you think she has been purposely avoiding me ? "

" She may be wanting to learn whether you have any brains. Try the other side."

Dick tried it and, at nine-twenty by the clock, almost ran into the girl who was not Ethel.

" Please ! " he said, desperately. " Let me speak to you. I have something to show you that will explain why I was so sure you were Ethel."

For a moment it looked as though she would pass on, ignoring his existence ; but, as already suggested, she possessed a certain sense of justice, and perhaps, also, a certain sense of humour. We refuse to insinuate that she was at all influenced by curiosity.

" I don't know that I'm interested," she said, coldly, describing a small circle with a foot in a very white stocking and very black shoe, and eyeing the operation as if nothing else mattered.

" Oh, please be interested ! It's really a most extraordinary story I've got to tell you," said Dick. " Do let me walk along with you, wherever you may be going."

At that she gave him quite a shrewd little look, which he bore without flinching ; in fact, he took advantage of it to examine the colour of her eyes, a soft dark grey, undeniably lovely.

" Very well," she said ; " I am going to an office in Norfolk Street, and you may walk with me until you have made your explanation. But I must hurry." And she set off briskly.

Now anyone who has tried to explain an important and complicated matter to a companion while hurrying along those busy pavements will sympathize with Dick Armstrong ; and anyone who has tried to listen to such an explanation will sympathize with the girl who was not Ethel. And what with getting over the side streets and crossing Wellington Street and Aldwych, and finally the Strand itself, Dick's remarks were so hopelessly incoherent that on reaching her destination in Norfolk Street the girl said :—

" Well, here we are, and you haven't told me a thing ! However, it doesn't matter. Good morning ! "

" One moment, for Heaven's sake ! " cried Dick. " I ought to have shown you this to begin with, but I couldn't bring myself to show it on the open street."

" What is that ? " she demanded, staring at the folded card in his hand.

" It's Ethel," was his reply. " Let me come into the vestibule for a minute, and I'll show it you."

" Dear me, what a fuss ! " she said, rather impatiently. " Well, you may come in for half a minute," she added more graciously, and permitted him to ascend the steps and enter the doorway, which was, of course, free to any person in London with the normal number of capable legs.

In the comparative quiet of the entrance-hall he drew a long breath, unfolded the card, and handed it to her. And great was his reward !

Wide went the lovely eyes, wide the pretty mouth, and then out came the wonder words :—

" Why, goodness me, it's ME ! Ethel, indeed ! "

" Now you forgive me ! " cried our young man, joyously—and prematurely.

Severely she regarded him and severely she said :—

" Be good enough to tell me at once how my photograph comes to be in your possession, and why you call it Ethel when my name is——"

The severity Dick would have suffered gladly in order to learn her name, and he waited hopefully, but in vain.

" Where did you get it ? I must have an answer."

" From my sister," he faltered.

" Your sister ! "—incredulously.

" Surely you must know her. She is Mrs. Maxwell Brown, and she lives in Newcastle."

" I know no person of that name."

" Well, I'm beaten, but I swear I got it from her. If you turn the card over you'll

find 'Ethel' written on it in her writing. That's why I thought——"

"Ethel! How could anyone who knows me write 'Ethel' on my photo?"

"It's really a pretty name. I've got awfully fond of it in the last eight months. You see——"

"Excuse me, but I'm not interested in your fondness for the name 'Ethel.' I do, however, wish to have full particulars of how the photograph came to you from your sister."

"Well, it's rather a long story——"

"Begin at once!" She glanced at her wrist. "Oh, this will never do!" she muttered.

"If you would only have a little patience with me," he pleaded. "If I had my sister's letter here—but no, I don't think I could possibly show it you—not yet, at any rate."

"I don't wish to see your sister's letter," she said, not unkindly. "I seem to have taken your word for things so far—otherwise I should not be standing here, when I ought to be at my work in the office."

"I'm awfully sorry——"

"Never mind that. Just tell me where your sister got my photograph."

"I don't know. I wish I did."

"That's extraordinary! However, you must know why she gave it to you."

"She sent it to me in a letter last August, when I was in Canada. I tried to tell you that as we came along." Dick was, to put it mildly, very pink.

"Well, perhaps you did. But why—why on earth did she send it to you?"

Dick, now quite red, hesitated.

"Do make haste!" she exclaimed, tapping the floor with a black and white foot.

"I can't tell you that," he stammered. "I mean to say, I can't tell you till we—er—have got to know each other a—a little better."

"Oh, really!"—haughtily.

"Don't be angry. I know I'm keeping you from the office, but it's rather a long story——"

"It is!"

"——and I don't quite understand it myself; and if I tried to tell it you in my—my present condition, you might misunderstand——"

"That is highly probable! There is a fearful want of clearness about your remarks——"

"If you would only tell me your name and address, and let me write, or see you privately——"

A cold frown checked him. For the first time, though she could not have told why, she was suspicious of his ingenuousness.

"Thank you, that will do," she said, stiffly. "I am perfectly satisfied with your explanation, and there is no need for you to address me again. Good morning!" Folding the card she put it in her bag and turned to go.

"My photo!" wailed this most unfortunate of young men.

"Don't be absurd! How can my photo be yours?" With which blinding flash of feminine logic she darted across the hall, past the closing gate of the lift—and disappeared.

And as the gate clanged she recollected a name—Mrs. Maxwell Brown—his sister's—and somehow, after all, it was not wholly unfamiliar. Where, when, had she seen or heard it—and not so long ago, either? And "Newcastle"? Why, of course! She remembered now—and oh, goodness! where had her wits been when he mentioned Mrs. Maxwell Brown, of Newcastle? Once more her sense of justice woke up.

At the fourth landing—her destination—she said to the lift attendant:—

"Ground floor, please. I've forgotten something."

And on the ground floor she stamped her black and white foot, angry with him, angry with herself. Then smiled. "He is pretty sure to turn up to-morrow."

But he didn't. He might have done so but for the excellent Murray's excellent advice, which was to this effect:—

"Wait till you have seen your sister and got everything shipshape and cut and dried."

"But she's got my Ethel—I mean the photo."

"And a very good thing, too! Look here, my lad, you've *got* to concentrate on this business of ours. I can't do it all on my own."

"I'm an ass," said the penitent. "Forgive me, old chap. Perhaps it's the spring."

"Well," said the sagacious Murray, "I can't think of its happening in the Strand in a snowstorm."

SO for seven mornings, including Sunday, Dick did not go out before breakfast.

And for six mornings the girl who was not Ethel passed along to her office as usual—well, not quite as usual—at least, there was something a little different in her expression. Four mornings she walked proudly on the north side of the Strand, to the furtive delight of hard-headed elderly gentlemen in the coffee-room of the aforesaid old-established hostelry. On the fifth she walked just as proudly on the south side; and of her progress on the sixth the same may be said except that, for the space of a few seconds, she paused to admire—with one lovely eye—the shining wares of Monsieur Rimmel.

"I say, Madge," he began, "do you happen to remember a letter you wrote to me in August?"

And on the afternoon of the eighth day, the great business having been completed to his own and his partner's satisfaction, Dick took train from King's Cross for Newcastle.

It was after eleven when, having supped with Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Brown and exchanged the family news, he sat down with his hostess in the comfortable library of her happy home. The host, who had caught cold on a recent journey, had excused himself and retired—unregretted by Dick, who was impatient to get to close quarters with his sister.

"I say, Madge," he began, "do you happen to remember a letter you wrote to me in August?"

"Mercy, no, Dick! If I remembered the letters I've written I should never write any more!" In her way Mrs. Maxwell Brown was something of a marvel. A successful manager of a fairly large establishment, a big husband and three young children, she was also as wildly impulsive, irresponsible, and feather-brained a creature as ever brought confusion into a confounded world. "In August—well, what about it?" she asked carelessly.

"You enclosed in it," said Dick with emotion, "the photograph of a girl whom you called Ethel—— Hold on, Madge! What's the matter?"

The question was reasonable, seeing that Mrs. Maxwell Brown had fallen back in her chair, in fits of laughter.

"Oh, Dicky!" she gurgled at last, "what a scream that was! Let me get my breath and I'll tell you about it."

"A scream!" growled Dicky. "Hurry up!"

"It was a bit exasperating, too," said Mrs. Maxwell Brown, more soberly, "for I did like the girl, and thought her a perfect——"

"Oh, try to be coherent, Madge! What girl?"

"Why, Ethel, of course!"

"But who the deuce is Ethel?"

"Really, Dick!" Mrs. Maxwell Brown sat up and tried to look dignified; only to relapse into fits.

"Control yourself!" said her brother. "I happen to know that the name of the girl whose photo you sent me is not Ethel."

She stopped laughing. "How on earth did you find out that?"

"Never mind just now. What did you mean by writing such a letter and——"

"Tell me just what I said in the letter."

"You said that a most charming girl, with most delightful people, had come to live opposite; that her name was Ethel; that you and she had become the greatest friends; that you sent her portrait, and hoped I would fall in love with it, and come home and marry her—and other rot to the same effect. That's what you said."

"So I do believe I did," Mrs. Maxwell Brown admitted. "And was the girl in the photo I sent you hideous?"

"Hideous! Madge, you're raving! How could she be hideous?"

"You must remember that I never saw the photo I sent to you."

"Never saw it! Then how—oh, Lord, I give it up!"

"Do sit still, and I'll try to tell you what happened. It was the most natural thing in the world, and might have happened to anybody——"

"Oh, go on, go on!"

"I'm going on as fast as I can," said Mrs. Maxwell Brown in an aggrieved tone. "You see, we were going off to Scotland next day, and half the house was dismantled and everything in a frightful muddle. But I was quite determined, before we left home, to get off your birthday letter——"

"My birthday's in July."

"I know, dear. But better late than never. Well, somehow I managed to get it written, and suddenly I had the happy thought of sending you Ethel's photo, which she had given me a month or two before. Besides, Henry—I could never think why—could not stick it, as he vulgarly said, in the drawing-room. And Ethel is really fascinating in her way, though some people——"

"What about the letter?"

"The letter—oh, yes! Well, I couldn't find a proper-sized envelope for the photo anywhere, and at last, with letter and photo, I rushed into Miss Jones's sitting-room——"

"Who the devil is Miss Jones?"

"Dick, if you behave like that, I sha'n't say another word!"

"Sorry! Please go on, Madge."

"Well, I rushed into Miss Jones's room—Miss Jones was the kiddies' governess, of course—such a sweet girl—and asked Miss Jones if she had any big envelopes. And Miss Jones said she thought she had some in the bureau, if I wouldn't mind looking. Miss Jones's bureau was in a frightful muddle, for Miss Jones was packing up, too, to go away in the morning to be married—such a nice young fellow—and *so* good-looking—and not at all badly off—rather reminded me of you, the way you sprawl your legs, when he came to see Miss Jones. Henry and I were frightfully sorry to lose Miss Jones, and the kiddies were simply desolated. Henry and I gave her——"

"The letter, Madge, the letter—and the photo!"

"Yes—but how am I going to tell you, if you keep on interrupting? Now where was I?"

"At Miss Jones's bureau."

"Oh, yes! Well, as I said, it was in a frightful muddle, and I'm afraid I made it worse, for the maids were continually worrying me for instructions, and the kiddies were most distracting; but at last I found a big envelope and banged in the letter and photo. Did I write anything on the photo?"

"You wrote 'Ethel' on the back."

"Yes; I have a vague recollection of writing something on it. Then I addressed it, sent Billy with it to the pillar-box at the corner, and forgot all about it till Christmas. By the way, did I forget to stamp it?"

"You did—but never mind that now."

"My dear, I'm *so* grieved, but I was *so* rushed——"

"Righto! What reminded you of it at Christmas?"

"Why, I got a letter from Miss Jones, or, rather, Mrs. Thomas Carstairs, and when I opened it I just sat down and laughed till I cried!"

"What was the joke?" wearily inquired Dick.

"Why, out fell the photo of Ethel, which I thought I had sent to you. Miss Jones—I mean Mrs. Carstairs—wrote to say she had found it among a lot of papers she hadn't had time to look through sooner, and wondered if I had seen anything of a photo, mounted in much the same style, of a friend of hers—a girl with dark hair and eyes—I forget the rest of the description. But wasn't it a perfect scream, Dicky?"

"Oh, rather," replied Dick, with savage bitterness.

"I was rather glad about it, too," his sister proceeded, "because, you see, Ethel, the little wretch, had gone and got engaged in September. Besides, she wasn't as nice as I thought at first, and her people—well, you should hear Henry on the father! As for the mother——"

"Listen, Madge! What did you say in

your reply to Miss Jones, or whatever she calls herself now ? "

" Mrs. Carstairs. He was really such a nice fellow. Henry was quite taken with him when he dined with us one——"

" Oh, blazes ! What did you say to her about the photo ? "

" My dear Dick, there is no need for such snappiness ! As a matter of fact, I haven't yet answered her letter—been so awfully rushed, one way and another. And, anyway, I wasn't going to explain that I had sent her friend's photo to you—was I ? "

" You might have let *me* know about the blunder."

" So I might, old thing, but it didn't seem worth while after Ethel—she's really rather a horrid little thing ; I doubt if she's sincere—had got engaged. He's ever so much older than she, appallingly rich, and Henry says——"

" Oh, devil take him ! "

" Dick, how dare you speak so of my husband ! "

" I didn't mean your husband. Answer me this question : Did Miss Jones——"

" Mrs. Carstairs, dear."

" Did Mrs. Carstairs mention the name of her friend ? "

" Oh, no ! Why should she ? I don't suppose you've kept the photo, or I should——"

" Can you give me her address. Don't ask questions—answer them ! "

" Really, Dick, you are quite insufferable ! I suppose it's with living far away from decent society——"

" I want Mrs. Carstairs' address ! "

" What on earth for ? "

Dick got up, looking as his sister had never before seen him look. " Madge," he said, sternly, " you have made trouble enough with your folly and blundering. Don't argue ! Give me the address."

" I'll get it for you," she said, rather subdued, and left the room.

Dick lit a cigarette and paced the floor impatiently.

She came back smiling. " I can't find the address at the moment," she said, sweetly, " but I know it's somewhere in Java."

" Java ! "

" But I thought you'd like to see Ethel." She opened a folded card not unlike the familiar one, and pushed it into his unwilling hand. " Ethel is really quite pretty when she's at her best, as you see her there, and she has her good points. I shouldn't wonder if the present engagement——"

" H'm ! " muttered Dick, with a sour glance at the by no means unattractive features of a fair, rather plump girl. " Ugh ! " He sent the card fluttering across the room. " Have you a railway time-table ? "

" Time-table, indeed ! " cried Mrs. Maxwell Brown, offended. " I'm going to bed."

" Good night ! You don't mind my using the 'phone ? The taxi people will know about the trains."

" Trains ! "

" London trains."

" Oh, Dick ! " she exclaimed, melting. " Why are you so cross with me—your one and only sister ? "

It was on Dick's tongue to remark that one was enough, but instead he kissed her, saying : " Don't fret, old girl ; but I must be in London by morning. That's all I can tell you now."

" Morning ? "

" Before nine o'clock."

IT was Saturday, and as soon as the train had started Dick began to wonder, among other things, whether she came into the Strand on Saturdays. However, he was there, freshly-shaven and generally well-groomed, though heavy about the eyes, at nine o'clock—nay, a few minutes before the hour. He chose the north side, at the narrow part, and tried to keep an eye also on the south pavement. But the strain was too much, and in a panic of anxiety lest he should miss her, he took a taxi along to Norfolk Street, where he waited in a pitiable state of torment.

At half-past nine she came round the corner, and he went from the office entrance to meet her, his heart in a flurry, his sight not absolutely clear, for life itself seemed to depend on what happened in the next few seconds. As for the girl, she was hardly her own mistress just then ; certainly she could not command her colour—a pink rose that turned red, a red rose that turned almost white—nor her lips, that weakened into the frailest of smiles.

" Don't be angry," he said, huskily, and she gave her head a little shake.

" I had to come back," he went on. " I should have come back in any case, but I felt I had some right to come back now, because I have seen my sister and she has explained the mystery of your photograph."

She nodded. " My friend, Miss Jones, who had a photo of me——"

" Ah, you knew ! " he cried, hurt.

" I remembered a moment after you had gone that morning. I—I'm sorry," she said, softly. " I have since wondered and guessed that, somehow, your sister——"

" Yes, she meant to send me another photo, which was on a similar mount. But it's a long story, and I——"

" I must go ! " she exclaimed, with a

glance at her wrist. "I dare not be late again."

"You are no longer angry with me?"

"No—if I was ever really angry. And now that I understand that you are not to blame——"

"But there's no end of things I should like to explain."

"Is there any need to do that?"

"Awful need! Won't you give me a chance to tell you the whole story? But perhaps you don't wish to hear it. Still, in justice to my poor self——"

And once again her sense of justice, and of humour too, to say nothing of other influences, came into play.

"I admit I'm a wee bit curious," she said, "but it's all so unusual——"

"That's it!" cried Dick, as one inspired. "It's all so unusual that a little more unusualness cannot hurt anybody. And so—and so I beg of you to let me take you to lunch to-day and let me tell you everything."

"M'm!" murmured the girl who was not Ethel, eyeing that pretty circling foot of hers, and there was a long silence.

If our young man had been made of, and clothed with, transparent material you would surely have seen his throbbing heart sink down, down into his left boot—absurd to talk of one heart being in two boots at once!—and then fly up like a rocket.

She had lifted brave eyes to his. "Thank you," she said quietly. "I shall be free at a quarter to one."

Before he could speak she was gone.

AND now we behold them in Gatti's—she had refused the Cecil grill-room—at the coffee stage.

The story *had* been rather a long one; indeed, it was not yet quite finished—or, at least, not rounded off.

"I suppose," she was saying, "that this Miss Ethel is a very pretty girl."

"Homeliest of the homely," answered Dick, striking a match. "Of course," he added, "you must remember I've only seen her photo."

"You make me wonder why your sister should have sent—or, rather, intended to send—it to you."

Dick took out a letter, unfolded it, and placed it in front of her, his hand shaking slightly. "If you will read the third page," he said, "you may understand the meaning of several things."

She hesitated. "Ought I to read your sister's letter, Mr. Armstrong?"

"It meant nothing to Madge, but much to me when it came to me out in the wilds, eight months ago. It may tell you something of what I felt when I saw you in the Strand, ten days ago. Try to remember that I did not see you then for only the first—no, nor yet for the first hundredth time. Please read it."

He did not watch her. He did not dare. She came to the lines: "So I'm sending you Ethel's photo—she's even prettier in reality—and I hope you will fall in love with it and come home soon and marry her"—and as the rosy shade crept up her neck she understood, as he had said she might, the meaning of several things. Downcast she refolded the letter and slowly pushed it across to him. He let it lie. He had to nerve himself to move—to look at her.

She was calmly putting on her gloves.

He called and paid the waiter, pocketed the letter, and said:—

"If you are not too displeased with me, will you spend an hour in the park? It's a perfect afternoon."

She looked doubtful. "When I 'phoned mother I said I'd be home not later than half-past three."

"You could 'phone her again."

"Could I?"—this with an air of illumination delightful to see. "Well——"

So they went to the park, and there Dick said suddenly:—

"Have you noticed that I have not asked your name?"

"Yes; I have noticed that."

"And thought it odd?"

"Perhaps." A pause. "Ethel is a pretty name—don't you think so?"

"I have thought so for eight months."

"H'm! What a mix-up it has been! Suppose your sister had sent you the right photo——"

"She did!"

"I mean the other one."

"She couldn't have sent any but the one she did."

"Why not?"

"She was simply an instrument of Fate. So was your friend, Miss Jones, who muddled her bureau."

"Well, really!"

"So was my good friend and partner, Murray Colvert, who was so slow in getting up that I decided to take a walk in the Strand that morning."

"So you believe in Fate, Mr. Armstrong?" she said lightly.

"In two Fates—Kind and Unkind."

"And which——?" She stopped short, drawing herself up.

"It is for you to say," he said tenderly.

"How can *I* say?"

"By telling me whether—there—is—anyone else."

"Oh! Mr. Armstrong, I have known you only for about two hours!"

"Fully three."

"Well, three, if you insist. And you don't know even my name!"

"I should like to know your name—but only if there is no one else. Can you tell it me?"

They came to a seat and sat down.

"Can you tell it me?" he asked again.

A pause.

"Oh, I can't say it."

"Do try."

"You're looking!"

"Well, I can't help it."

"Oh, dear!" she sighed—then smiled. "Goodness me! Why didn't I think of it

Dick placed the letter in front of her. "If you will read the third page," he said, "you may understand the meaning of several things."

"My name is not as pretty as Ethel," she murmured.

"But it will be, if you can tell it me," said our young man, whose pulses were now crazy.

"Don't look at me!" she whispered suddenly.

"I'm not. I'm only listening."

before?" she murmured. "*Please* don't look!"

Dick turned his back—almost.

Presently something white came shyly into his hand.

A visiting-card!

But even so the girl who was not Ethel blushed beautifully.

"Days of My Life"

By

H. RIDER HAGGARD

IX. (*continued*).—SOME NOTABLE PEOPLE I HAVE MET.

I DID not know Cecil Rhodes in Africa, where we never crossed each other's paths; indeed, I think he only arrived there towards the end of my time. We first met in London, I believe somewhere about the year 1888, when I was asked to meet him at the National Liberal Club. At that time he was little known; I do not think that I had ever heard of him before. He impressed me a good deal, and I remember his explaining to me in great detail the provisions of a measure he was introducing into the Cape Parliament, I think it was the Glen Grey Act, in such detail indeed that I lost the thread of the thing and grew bewildered. Rhodes could rarely be persuaded to write a letter, but my recollection is that he could talk at a great pace when he was in the mood.

When he was in England just before the Jameson Raid I saw Rhodes several times, for it was then that the African people were anxious that I should stand for Parliament. I remember going to breakfast with him at the Burlington Hotel. He was then at the height of his success, and the scene was very curious. Already before breakfast a number of people, some of them well known, who were not asked to that meal, were waiting about in ante-rooms on the chance of getting a word with or a favour from the great man.

It reminded me of a picture I have seen of Dr. Johnson and others hanging about in the vestibule of, I think, Lord Chesterfield's apartment for a like object. There was the same air of patient expectancy upon their faces. In a china bowl on a table I observed a great accumulation of unopened letters, most of which had a kind of society look about them; probably they were invitations and so forth. It was, I have understood, one of the habits of the Rhodes entourage not to trouble to open letters that came by post. Unless these were of known importance they only attended to those that were sent by hand, or to telegrams, and the replies were generally verbal or telegraphic. Perhaps this was owing to press of business, or perhaps to a pose, or to a combination of both.

The last time that I ever saw Rhodes must have been about a year later, probably when he was in England after the Jameson Raid affair. I went to call on him on some matter, I entirely forget what it was, at the Burlington Hotel, and found him alone. We talked for a long while, though again I forget the subject of our conversation. What I remember is the appearance of the man as he paced restlessly up and down the long room like a lion in a cage, throwing out his words in jerky, isolated sentences, and in a curious high voice that sometimes almost attained to a falsetto. He gave me the idea of being in a very nervous state, as I dare say was the case.

His was one of those big, mixed natures of which it is extremely difficult to form a just opinion. My own, for what it is worth, is that he loved his country and desired above all things to advance her interests; also that he was personally very ambitious. He set great ends before himself and went to work to attain them at any cost. To begin with he saw that money was necessary, so he rubbed shoulders with speculators, with Jews, with anybody who was useful, and by means of this deal or that deal made the money, not for its own sake, but that he might use it to fulfil the purposes of his busy and far-reaching brain. He outwitted Kruger; he destroyed the Matabele;

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he seized the vast territories of Rhodesia and persuaded the British public to find him the gold wherewith to finance them, most of which the British public has, I imagine, lost. But the Empire has gained, for Rhodesia does not run away like the capital in over-financed and unremunerative companies. One day it may be a great asset of the Crown, if the Imperial possessions hold together.

It would almost seem as though Rhodes was one of those men who have been and still are raised up by that Power, of the existence of which he seems to have been dubious, to fulfil certain designs of Its own. There have been a good many with somewhat similar characteristics. Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, Chaka come to my mind as I write.

Had it not been for Rhodes I incline to the belief that the Germans would have taken Rhodesia, perhaps after a preliminary occupation by the Boers. That danger, I think, was present to his thoughts and was one of the reasons which induced him to strike, and strike hard, caring nothing for the blood that splashed up from the blow. In the same way he wished to seize the Transvaal by a *coup de main*, or rather a *coup d'épée*, but here he miscalculated the strength of the opposing forces. Or perhaps, as he himself said, Jameson, whom I also knew and who possesses, I think, in some ways a higher nature than did Rhodes, upset his "apple-cart." At least, whatever his faults, he was a great figure in his generation, and his name must always be remembered if only by that of the vast territory he seized, which he still surveys from his tomb-eyrie on the Matoppos.

Rhodes had his weaknesses like other men. A few years ago I was staying with Lord Carrington, now the Marquess of Lincolnshire. He told me a little story with reference to Rhodes's declaration, which Lord Carrington said he had often made, to the effect that he would accept no title or favour from Royalty. They were both of them commanded to Windsor at the same time, and Lord Carrington gave me a lively description of the intense amusement of the company when the late Queen came down to dinner and in a very marked manner asked one of the gentlemen-in-waiting whether he had been careful to see that the "*Right Honourable* gentleman," pointing to Cecil Rhodes, had been made comfortable in every way, thereby indicating the conferring of a Privy Councillorship upon him, which he had *not* refused.

X.—THE WRITING OF ROMANCES.

"There is but one bag of tricks in romance"—No one can hope to repeat the effect of Robinson Crusoe—The need of a good central idea—Some instances of imagination verified by fact—The best passages in my books.

OF the next few years of my life there is not much to tell. I lived here at Ditchingham in a very quiet and retired fashion, rarely visiting London, wrote a few novels, and for recreation occupied myself with farming and gardening, for which occupations I have always had an instinctive taste. The work that I did was a good deal attacked; it was the fashion to attack me in those days; possibly owing to my ill-health some of it may not have been quite up to the mark, I do not know. What I do know is that I grew heartily tired of the writing of stories.

After the birth of my youngest child, Lilias, which to my great joy happened at the end of the year 1892, my health and spirits began to mend and my energy to return, largely owing, I think, to the treatment of my friend, Dr. Lyne Stivens. I was still a youngish man, but had reached that time of life when I felt that, if I was to make any change of occupation, it must be done at once. And I longed to make a change, for this humdrum existence in a country parish, staring at crops and cultivating flowers, was, I felt, more suitable to some aged man whose life's work was done than to myself. Also, at this time the unrealities of fiction-writing greatly wearied me, oddly enough, much more than they do at present, when they have become a kind of amusement and set-off to the more serious things and thoughts with which my life is occupied.

Still, it is true that even now, if circumstances allowed of it, I do not think I should write much more fiction, at any rate of the kind that people would buy. With the exception of certain stories that I should like to tell for their own sake, and not to earn money by them, I should occupy my time with writings of a different sort connected, probably, for the most part with the land, agriculture, and social matters.

I know that folk, very superior folk, exist who affect to scorn the base person who does one kind of work when he would like to do another, merely because the former does and

the latter does not pay. There is something to be said for this position, but if a man chances to realize that he does not live unto himself alone, and to have many dependent upon him, directly or indirectly, or if he chances to desire to render gratuitous services to his country, he must, in such a case, "cut his coat according to his cloth."

Therefore, although I should have dearly liked to place on record my views of Irish agriculture, in place thereof I have found myself obliged to edit certain of the reminiscences of Mr. Allan Quatermain. To be honest, these have amused me not a little, perhaps because I always find it easy to write of Allan Quatermain, who, after all, is only myself set in a variety of imagined situations, thinking my thoughts and looking at life through my eyes. Indeed, there are several subjects with which I always find it not difficult to deal; for instance, Old Egypt, the Norse, and African savages. Of these last, however, I prefer to write in the company of the late Allan Quatermain.

AND now, as I dare say I shall allude to the subject no more, I will add a word on the general matter of the writing of romances. This, I gather from remarks that have been made to me and many letters that I have received, is supposed to be a very easy art, if, indeed, it is worthy to be classified under that high name. As a matter of fact, it is difficult. In a novel, as the word is generally understood, the author may discourse upon a thousand topics; nothing, or, at any rate, very little, is barred to him. He may burrow in the obscene depths of human nature, he may discuss politics, religion, metaphysics, socialism, "love" in all its forms, the elemental or artificial divisions between the sexes—oh! what is there that he may not and does not discuss? Nothing that appears in the columns of the daily papers, nothing that is within the range of the human intellect lies beyond his legitimate, or illegitimate, scope.

In romance all this is different; the lines between which he must move are by comparison extremely narrow. As I remember Besant put it admirably when answering some onslaught on myself in connection with "Montezuma's Daughter": "There is but one bag of tricks in romance."

The love interest, at least among English-speaking peoples, must be limited and restrained in tone, must follow the accepted lines of thought and what is defined as morality. Indeed, it may even be omitted, sometimes with advantage. The really needful things are adventure, how impossible it matters not at all, provided it is made to appear possible, and imagination, together with a clever use of coincidence and an ordered development of the plot, which should, if possible, have a happy ending, since few folk like to be saddened by what they read. If they seek melancholy, it can be found in ample measure in real life, or in the daily papers. Still, the rule of the happy ending is one that may be broken at times; at least, I have dared to do so on some occasions, and notably in the instance of "Eric Brighteyes." I remember that Charles Longman remonstrated with me on this matter at the time, but I showed him that the story demanded it; that, although I, too, wept over the evil necessity, it *must* be so!

Now adventure in this narrow world of ours is a limited quantity, and imagination, after all, is hemmed in by deductions from experience. When we try to travel beyond these the results become so unfamiliar that they are apt to lack interest to the ordinary mind. I think I am right in saying that no one has ever written a really first-class romance dwelling solely, for example, upon the utterly alien life of another world or planet with which human beings cannot possibly have any touch. Homer and others bring such supernormal life into the circle of our own surroundings and vivify it by contact, or by contrast, with the play of human nature, as exemplified in their characters. But it will not stand alone. We are not strong and skilled enough to carve out of quite familiar material figures so life-like that even in a dreaming hour they can pass as real. I repeat, therefore, that the lines which close in the kingdom of romance are very narrow, and that the material which must be used is so much handled that nowadays it has become difficult to fashion from it any shape that is novel enough or sufficiently striking to catch the attention of the world.

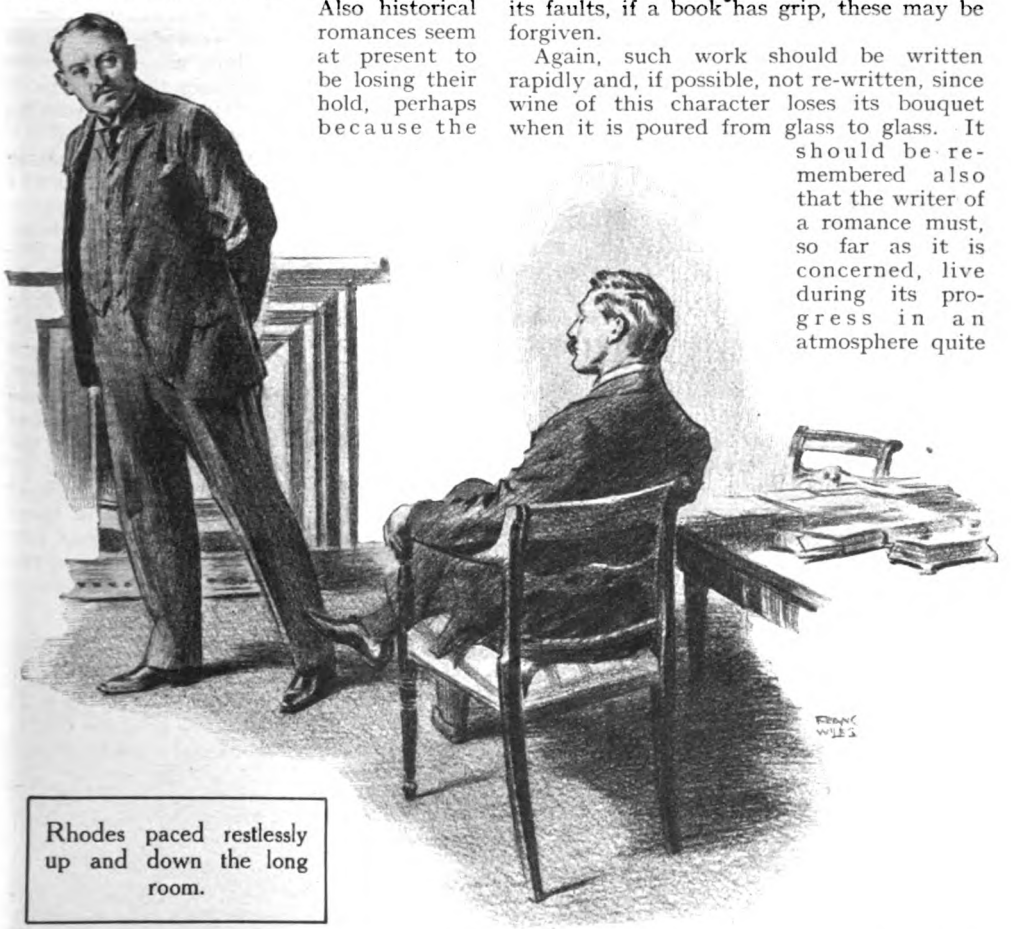
What is there that has not been used? Who, to take a single instance, can hope to repeat the effect of Robinson Crusoe on his desert island or the thrill of that naked footprint in the sand? Defoe exhausted these long ago; every thing of the sort that follows must be a mere *pastiche*.

To pass over other salient and familiar examples, I may, with humility, remark that even a second "She" would offer difficulties to her originator. In my own day some have been tried and proved very ephemeral creations. The stock of such ideas, in short, is being rapidly used up. There are only a certain number of pieces of glass in the kaleidoscope, and the total of the patterns that these can form is, after all, but limited. With all the world explored and exhausted, I feel sorry for the romance writers of the future, for I know not whither

they will turn without bringing themselves into competition with the efforts of dead but still remembered hands and exposing themselves to the sneers of the hunters-out of "plagiarisms."

History remains to them, it is true, but that ground has already been well tilled. Also historical romances seem at present to be losing their hold, perhaps because the many forget, or only remember to deplore, a book is written that it may be read. The first duty of a story is to keep him who peruses it awake; if he is a tired man and it succeeds in doing this, then, within its limitations, it is a good tale. In romance "grip" is almost everything. Whatever its faults, if a book has grip, these may be forgiven.

Again, such work should be written rapidly and, if possible, not re-written, since wine of this character loses its bouquet when it is poured from glass to glass. It should be remembered also that the writer of a romance must, so far as it is concerned, live during its progress in an atmosphere quite alien to that of everyday life. Now this in a workaday world is not easy to grown people, who perhaps have many affairs and anxieties to distract them, even if they possess or have acquired the power of dividing their brains into more or less watertight compartments. Indeed, for longer than a certain period it becomes almost impossible. Therefore, as the quality of the resulting story will depend upon the preservation of this atmosphere of romance while it is being evolved, it is highly desirable that the actual period of evolution should be short. Personally I have proved this again and again, almost to the extent that in the case of my own books I can



Rhodes paced restlessly up and down the long room.

reader of to-day fears lest he should be acquiring some useful information against his will.

Now as to the method of romance-writing. It should in my judgment be swift, clear, and direct, with as little padding and as few trappings as possible. The story is the thing, and every word in the book should be a brick to build its edifice. Above all, no obscurity should be allowed. Let the characters be definite, even at the cost of a little crudeness, and so with the meaning of each sentence. Tricks of "style" and dark allusions may please the superior critics; they do not please the average reader, and, though this seems to be a fact that

judge how long they have taken to write by their quality, although I may long have forgotten the amount of time I spent on each.

So it comes to this: the way to write a good romance is to sit down and write it almost without stopping. Of course some preliminary reflection is desirable to the extent of a central idea round which the story must revolve. For example, in "She" that central idea was a woman who had acquired practical immortality, but who found that her passions remained immortal too. In "The Holy Flower," which I finished yesterday, to take another case, the central idea is that of a gorilla which is worshipped as a god and periodically slays the king, who holds his office as the brute's priest and servant, with all the terrors that result from such a situation. In the case of both these books, as of many others, I had nothing more in my mind when I set myself to face them. Of course in such circumstances beginnings are hard—*c'est le premier pas qui coûte*"—but after that the thing will generally evolve itself. It is merely a case of what Anthony Trollope used to call "cobbler's wax." Or if it "will not do so" the author had better give up romance-writing and take up some useful occupation that is more within his powers.

Of course these are only my views, but they are based upon an experience that is now painfully extended. Other men may have other and better methods so far as they are concerned. They presuppose, however, that the writer is to a sufficient degree possessed by the Spirit of Romance, without which he will do nothing of any permanent or even of immediate value. The faculty of imaginative insight must be a part of his intellectual outfit. He must be able as he creates to summon each scene whereof he treats before the eyes of his mind. He must see the characters and their surroundings, the lion springing, the Zulu regiments rushing with uplifted spears, the fire eating into the grass of the hillside while before it the scorched snakes glide and hiss. He must share the every hope and care of those whom he begets; the rich, low voice of Ayesha must thrill his nerves, he must discern her enthralling and unearthly beauty and look into the mingled grandeurs of her blasted soul!

And so on, and on, for if he, the creator, does not know the beings and things which he creates; if the details of them are as blurred as the images in a defective glass, how can he expect to convey a clear picture to his reader? At the best that reader must help him out, must be the possessor of a certain receptive power, and able to fill in a thousand minutiæ of character and so forth, for to attempt to state these would overload the story, which, be it remembered, should consist of action, action, action from the first page to the last. For the rest little matters. Even if the writer does not know what is coming next the circumstance is of no importance, for it will come when it is wanted. There are even advantages in this, since if *he* does not know it is quite certain that his reader must remain in equal ignorance; a thing to be desired.

Such is the whole art of romance-writing as it is understood by me, who, critics may say *per contra*, do not understand it at all. To such as have sufficient experience of life and adventure in far lands, or sufficient vision to enable them to re-create the past, the gift is to be had for the taking—by those who can take. To such as lack these qualifications, it is somewhat hard to grasp and hold. But even if he possesses all this equipment I would warn the future artist not to expect too much success, since a perfect specimen of the true breed of the beautiful butterfly, Romance, is rarely to be caught. After the searcher has hunted all his life, if he finds two or three of them in his cabinet, he will have done very well indeed, and even at these connoisseurs who sit at home and do not hunt themselves will be found to cavil.

IT is curious how often imagination is verified by fact, perhaps, as I said at the beginning of this screed, because the lines in which it must work are narrow and after all based on fact, perhaps because it does possess some spiritual insight of its own. Many instances have come within my own experience of which I will quote a few that I chance to remember.

I pass over "King Solomon's Mines," a work of pure imagination, for in my day very little was known of the regions wherein its scenes were laid, many details of which have been verified by subsequent discovery. In its sequel, "Allan Quatermain," however, occurs a fine example of the literary coincidence. In this book I invented a mission station at an unexplored spot on the Tana River, which station I caused to be attacked by the Masai. In subsequent editions of the work I inserted the following note, which explains itself:—

> "By a very strange and sad coincidence, since the above was written, the Masai, in April, 1886, massacred a missionary and his wife—Mr. and Mrs. Houghton—on this same Tana River, and at the *spot described*. These are, I believe, the first white people who are

known to have fallen victims to this cruel tribe."

Again, in a tale called "Maiwa's Revenge," I gave an elaborate description of a certain escape of Allan Quatermain from pursuing savages who hunted him up the face of a cliff and seized hold of his ankles. He freed himself from their attentions by firing down on them along the line of his leg with a pistol. Some years later a gentleman arrived at this house whose name, I think, was Ebbage, and on whose card was printed the vague and remote address, "Matabeleland." He informed me that he had travelled especially from London to inquire how on earth I had learned the details of his escape from certain savages, as he had never mentioned them to a single soul. Before he left I satisfied myself that his adventure and that invented by myself and described in the tale, which I had thought one of a somewhat original sort, were in every particular identical.

Maiwa tugged at my left arm, the savage below tugged at my right leg.

On this page Sir Rider Haggard tells an interesting story of this exciting incident from "Maiwa's Revenge."

Again, in "Mr. Meeson's Will," I set out very fully indeed the circumstances in which a new and splendid liner was lost at sea and the great majority of those on board were drowned owing to lack of boats to accommodate them. In a preface to this story, written in the year 1888, I make the following remark :—

> "The only part of this humble skit, however, that is meant to be taken seriously is the chapter which tells of the loss of the R.M.S. *Kangaroo*. I believe it to be a fair and in the main accurate account of what must, and one day will, happen upon a large and crowded liner in the event of such a collision as that described, or of her rapid foundering from any other cause. It

is a remarkable thing that people, who for the most part set a sufficient value on their lives, daily consent to go to sea in ships the boats of which could not on emergency possibly contain half their number."

During the year in which I am writing, this prophecy, and, indeed, the whole scene of the sinking of the *Kangaroo*, has been fearfully fulfilled in the instance of the great White Star liner *Titanic*.

Another small instance of imagination being justified in my own case is to be found in my tale, "Stella Fregelius," where for the purposes of that mystical story I invented an instrument which I called the "aerophone," whereby people could speak with each other across a space of empty air. When I wrote this story, about the year 1898, neither I nor anyone else had heard of such a machine. Now I learn that it is working and patented under the same title, namely "aerophone," and doubtless ere long it will be in general use. It is right, however, that *per contra* I should chronicle a prophetic failure. In "Doctor Therne" I ventured to suggest that our general neglect of vaccination would bring about some outburst of small-pox such as in past days swept away our forefathers by the thousand, and still sweeps away uninstructed peoples. As yet this has not happened, but who can be bold enough to assert that it will never happen?

Before I finally leave the subject of romance-writing I should like to say a few words upon a certain point. I have been a good deal attacked because there is much fighting in many of my more imaginative works, which fighting necessarily involves the death of men, the inference being that to write of such things is not desirable. I would ask why not? However painful the fact, it remains true that man is a fighting animal, and that from the time of Homer down, and probably for tens of thousands of years before it, some of his finest qualities, such as patriotism, courage, obedience to authority, patience in disaster, fidelity to friends and a noble cause, endurance and so forth, have been evolved in the exercise of war, as we need go no further than the pages of the Old Testament to learn. Is it not better to write of hard, clean, honest fighting than, for instance, of treacherous and sickening murder? Will any young man be the worse for the lesson that his hands were given him to defend his head and, if need be, his country's honour with that of all who are dear to him? I think not.

Sir H. Rider Haggard in the garden that he loved.

It is true that in such a book as "Nada the Lily" there is much slaughter. But all this is a matter of history. A tale of the days of Chaka which left out his slayings and battles would be false to the facts and merely ludicrous. Omelets cannot be made without the breaking of eggs. Would such critics then argue that this tale and others like it should be left untold? If so, I hold that they are wrong, since these give a picture which, from the circumstances of my youth, perhaps I alone in the world can paint, not only of some very remarkable men, but of a state of savage society which has now passed away and may never recur.

Personally, I hate war, and all killing, down to the destruction of the lower animals for the sake of sport, has become abominable to me. But while the battle-clouds bank up I do not think that any can be harmed by reading of heroic deeds or of frays in which brave men lose their lives.

What I deem undesirable are the tales of lust, crime, and moral perversion with which the bookstalls are strewn by dozens.

I have often been asked and have been careful never to answer the question as to what I considered the best passages in my own humble writings. It is a very favourite query of the Casual Correspondent, from whom I receive, on an average, a letter a day, and sometimes many, many more. Now in acknowledgment of them all I reply —Ignosi's chant in "King Solomon's Mines" as it appears in the later editions of that book (the same that Stevenson called "a very noble imitation"); the somewhat similar chant to the Sun in "Allan Quatermain"; the scene where Eric Brighteyes finds his mother dead, which Lang declared was "as good as Homer," and the subsequent fight in the hall at Middlehof; the description of the wolves springing up at the dead body in the cave in "Nada the Lily"; the transformation in the chapter called "The Change" and "The Loosing of the Powers in 'Ayesha'"; a speech made by the heroine Mameena as she dies, in a work called "Child of Storm" (unpublished at the time of writing), with the rest of her death scene; the account of the passion of John and Jess as they swung together wrapt in each other's arms in the sinking wagon on the waters of the flooded Vaal, and, oh! I know not what besides. When one has written some fifty books the memory is scarce equal to the task of searching for plums amidst the dough. Also, when one has found them, they seem on consideration to be but poor plums at best. Also one thinks differently of their relative merits or demerits at different times. For instance, how about "She's" speech before she enters the fire, and the holding of the Stair by old Umslopogaas, and the escape of the ship in "Fair Margaret," or the Battle of Crécy in "Red Eve"? If I am asked what book of mine I think the best as a whole, I answer that one yet unpublished to my mind is the most artistic. At any rate, to some extent it satisfies my literary conscience. It is the book named "Child of Storm," to which I have alluded above, and is a chapter in the history of "Allan Quatermain." Of Allan, for obvious reasons, I can always write, and of Zulus, whose true inwardness I understand by the light of Nature, I can always write, and—well, the result pleases at least one reader—myself. Whether it will please others is a different matter.

Well, at last I have tried to answer the inquiries of the all-pervading Casual Correspondent in a somewhat superficial fashion. To do so thoroughly would involve weeks of reading of much that I now forget.

XI.—"RURAL ENGLAND."

My purpose in writing "A Farmer's Year"—A visit to Cyprus and the Holy Land—"Rural England" proves "the heaviest labour of all my laborious life."

AT this time the desire haunted me to do something in my day more practical than the mere invention of romance upon romance. By degrees it came home to me that a great subject lay to my hand, that of the state of English agriculture and of our rural population, also of all the questions thereto pertaining.

So forcefully did it come home that I grew to think, and indeed to believe, that I was appointed to serve my own, and perhaps other countries, by following up this neglected branch of research, which to many has seemed so useless and so dull. Therefore with a bold heart I gave all my spare time and energy to a study of the matter.

First I wrote the book that is called "A Farmer's Year," with the twofold purpose of setting down the struggles of those who were engaged in agriculture during that trying time and of preserving for the benefit of future generations, if these should care to read of them, a record of the circumstances of their lives and of the condition of their industry in England in the year 1898. In its way this book proved extraordinarily successful. It was reviewed and quoted everywhere, almost without exception with great favour. Also the letters that poured in upon me concerning it were almost without number; they still continue to arrive. But compared with my romances it brought me in but a small amount of money. For this there were several reasons. It was published at too low a price—7s. 6d.—whereby Charles Longman and I hoped to put it within the reach of all; also the charming illustrations by my friend, Mr. Leon

Little, of which I have the originals in this house, involved a good deal of expenditure.

The chief reason, however, is very simple. The British public as a whole is a nation of town dwellers and not rural in its tastes. It wants novels to read, not works that deal with agriculture in however interesting a fashion. He who treats of such subjects must do so at his own cost and be content to take his pay in honour and glory. Well, as I never expected anything else I was not disappointed at this lack of financial results. My objects were, as I have said, quite different. I set them out so clearly in the little Preface which I wrote some years later for the Silver Library Edition of the work that I will venture to quote it here:—

"In Ancient Egypt the gentlemen farmers of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties whilst yet alive caused their future sepulchres to be adorned with representations of such scenes of daily life and husbandry as to them were most pleasant and familiar.

"The study of these paintings and reliefs has delighted me as much to-day as it did when first I visited them in 1887. Whilst considering them it occurred to me that in this book, by means of the methods of my own age, I have unconsciously attempted to follow the example of the authors of these rock-hewn manuscripts who lived some fifty centuries ago.

"Perhaps, I thought to myself, in times to be, when all is changed again save the eternal ways of Nature that are the ways of God, the word-pictures of my pages also may thus interest and instruct unborn men of tastes akin to mine.

"Such is my hope"

IN January, 1900, I went with my family to Florence, where we stayed with my sister-in-law, Mrs. John Haggard, whose husband was at that time Consul in Noumea, whither he could not take his children. It was the year of the Boer War, and a melancholy business I found it to spell out the tale of our disasters in the Italian papers. *The Times* had asked me if I would care to go to South Africa as one of their war correspondents, but this did not strike me as an attractive business at my age. However, I entered into another arrangement with Mr. C. Arthur Pearson, the owner of *The Daily Express*. This was that on the conclusion of the war I should write a series of articles under the title of "The New South Africa," which would of course have involved a long journey in that country. This engagement was never fulfilled, for the reason that the war dragged on for another two years or so, before which time the British public was utterly weary of the subject of South Africa.

Upon this ground Pearson suggested that the contract should be cancelled. In the meantime, however, while I was taking my bath one morning, a domestic occasion

Ditchingham House, Norfolk—Sir H. Rider Haggard's home.

on which for some reason unexplained I have observed that I am more open to new impressions than at any other time, an idea struck me. It was to the effect that I should like to emulate Arthur Young, who more than a century before had travelled through and written of the state of agriculture in the majority of the English counties. Second thoughts showed me that the enterprise was very vast. It had taken Arthur Young about thirty years, if I remember right, not to complete it, for this neither he nor anyone else ever did, but to deal with about twenty-six counties, travelling leisurely on horseback and for the most part, I think, as an official of what in those days answered to the present Board of Agriculture.

If I may venture to compare myself with such a man, there is a considerable similarity between our aims and circumstances. We have both been animated by an overwhelming sense of the vital importance of British agriculture to this country and its citizens. We were both East Anglians and born of the class of landed gentry or "Squires." We have both been official servants of the State. We have both written novels and been much connected with the land. We were both practical farmers, which many who write on such things are not, and in the same counties. We were both tall, thin, with pronounced features, and possessed a nervous temperament and somewhat similar powers of observation. We both suffered a terrible loss that saddened our lives, though happily for him the blow fell in his later days. Both of us have been animated by the same hopes. To return, in the end I determined to cling to my inspiration and to follow old Arthur Young's example, if in any way I could manage so to do.

My chance came in connection with this South African agreement. In answer to Pearson's suggestion that it should be cancelled, I requested my agents, Messrs. A. P. Watt and Sons, to inform him that I was prepared to agree, on the condition that in place of it he would substitute another—namely, that the articles should deal with Rural England. Otherwise I would proceed to South Africa, as I had made all my plans to do. Pearson considered and in the end assented. I do not know that he was particularly anxious to exploit rural England in the columns of *The Daily Express*, but at any rate it was a fresh cry, whereas that of South Africa had become very stale indeed.

"My word, Dad, if I had written a book like that, I should spend the rest of my life sitting to stare at it!"

Before speaking of this matter, however, which only matured in the beginning of 1901, I will return for a moment to my travels, which commenced at Florence. I had arranged verbally with Moberley Bell, of *The Times*, to visit Cyprus and the Holy Land and to write for that journal some articles upon the affairs of the Near East. I did visit Cyprus and the Holy Land, but the articles were never written. For this reason: I took with me a nephew, now a respected lawyer verging on middle age, and I may say a relative for whom I have the greatest regard and the warmest affection, who was to act as my secretary. But if ever his eye should fall upon these lines I hope he will not be offended if I add that then, in the heyday of his very fascinating and festive youth, he proved the most erratic secretary with whom I have ever come in contact. I could never find him when I wanted him, and as for the heavy typewriter which we dragged about with us, all he did with it was to drop it on my toes out of the rack of a railway train. At last

I got sick of the article which alone clung to us after he had lost all the luggage on the Italian railways, causing us to proceed to Cyprus with practically nothing but the clothes in which we stood, and sent it home from that romantic isle packed in the remains of a mule-saddle, or something of the sort.

After this there was for a year or two a certain coolness between me and *The Times*, which had never received the promised articles, for of course I was unable to explain to them the real reason of my delinquencies. However, my affectionate nephew enjoyed himself enormously both in Cyprus and the Holy Land, whither I had taken him because I understood that he intended to enter the Church. As we sailed from Limasol for Beyrout he said in a hushed voice that he had something to tell me.

"Speak up," I answered, wondering, with an inward groan, whether he had engaged himself in marriage to the barmaid of the Nicosia Club.

It turned out, however, that what he had to confide was that he had changed his views about entering the Church, and up to this point had concealed the matter for fear lest I should refuse to take him on to the Holy Land, but spoke now perhaps because he did not wish to make the visit sailing under false colours. I reflected to myself that this *bouleversement* would be attributed to *my* evil influence, but said nothing. It all came right in the end, as such things do, and I am bound to add that although he did not shine as a secretary, a trade for which Nature never fashioned him, this dear nephew of mine was perhaps the pleasantest companion with whom I ever travelled.

In the intervals of getting him up in the morning and generally attending to his wants and my own, I managed to make some notes, out of which I subsequently wrote my book, "A Winter Pilgrimage."

The Holy Land impressed me enormously, although it is the fashion of many travellers to say that there they find nothing but disappointment. But of all these matters I have written in the "Winter Pilgrimage," so I will say no more about them.

OF "Rural England," the heaviest labour of all my laborious life, there is really not very much to say. There it is. I shall never forget the remark of my daughter Dolly, a young lady with a turn for humour, when these two great volumes—they contain as many words as would more than fill five novels—arrived from Messrs. Longmans and, portly, blue, and beautiful, stood before us on the table.

"My word, Dad," she said, "if *I* had written a book like that, *I* should spend the rest of my life sitting to stare at it!"

I confess that before all was finished I was inclined to share in this opinion. What a toil was that! First there were the long journeys; one of them took eight months without a break, though happily that summer was very different from this more disastrous year of cold and floods, 1912. Then there were the articles for *The Daily Express* and *Yorkshire Post*, which must be composed in my spare time, sometimes at midnight, of which I wrote more than fifty.

I do not think I could have completed the task at all without the assistance of my friend, Mr. Arthur Cochrane, who took the notes while I did the talking, and also helped very much in the preparation of the series of agricultural maps.

Strange and varied were the establishments in which Cochrane and I often found ourselves as guests during the course of these "Rural England" journeyings. When it was announced that I was going to visit a given county we invariably received many kind offers of hospitality. Since, as a rule, we knew nothing of our would-be hosts, our method of dealing with these was to take a map and accept those invitations at hazard which would bring us nearest to the centre of the various districts we wished to investigate. Really, it was a wise plan, for it brought us into touch with all sorts and conditions of men.

When, at the given day and hour, we drove up to the residence of our unknown host, often enough it was without knowing whether we should find a palace or a farm-house.

I could write a whole chapter, if not a small book, about the places where we stayed and their inhabitants. One night, for instance, we found ourselves in an ancient and gigantic baronial castle. Whilst I was undressing Cochrane arrived in my apartment, which was huge and gloomy, and asked me if I would mind coming to inspect his sleeping-place. I did, and by the light of a few struggling candles saw the most depressing room on which ever I had set eyes.

It was enormous, and in the centre of the back wall stood a four-post bed with black hangings and, I think, black hearse plumes at the corners. Round the walls were old full-length family portraits of a singularly grim description—I imagine they must have been memorial pictures—while over the mantelpiece sat an awful old seventeenth-century woman who held a skull in her hands. This very skull, by the way, was kept in a cupboard upstairs, where I saw the thing, which had something to do with the history of the family, or rather of that which preceded

it in the ownership of the castle and estate. Everything about the chamber was in thorough keeping with that skull; even the coal-box was black and shaped like a sarcophagus!

"This," said Cochrane (a lover of cheerful surroundings) in a feeble voice, "is no doubt the place where these people have been laid out for generations!"

Remembering the horrible "black bed" in the Verney Memoirs which used to be carted from house to house whenever a death was expected in the family, I agreed with him and departed, wishing him pleasant dreams and a good night's rest.

So huge was that castle, built, I believe, in the time of King John, that in the morning we were utterly unable to find our way to the breakfast room. Up and down passages we wandered, till at last we saw a table with writing materials on it and sat down there to answer letters until ultimately we were retrieved.

But I must not continue the record of such reminiscences of our journeyings, since of these truly there is no end.

(*To be concluded.*)

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 158.

(*The Second of the Series.*)

FIRST plunge in the sea, and, when weather is fair,
Disposed on the shore let the *second* their hair,
And various answers will fit, I declare.

1 His heart to a maiden of Athens he gave,
But, when charmed, for the love of another did crave.
2 In readiness, it is produced on the spot,
But can it a frolic forgo? it can not.
3 A tremor, a shaking! If asked, as a riddle,
What caused it, I'd venture, "The rat in the middle."
4 This mineral substance is highly esteemed,
But a very small type it may surely be deemed.
5. An additional clause, or a coin that is Dutch;
John Gilpin, one fears, was not practised as such.
6. A steed's aberration might cause one to frown,
Is bashful, but may bring the coco-nut down.

BOODLEBAR.

Answers to Acrostic No. 158 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on September* 11*th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 157.

THE first, a month of summer heat,
Brings dreams of restful holiday;
The last, a busy London street,
Brings dreams of dancing waves and spray.
Within the first and last combined
Joyous and quaint Romance we find.

1. Two words, a maiden; wrong, when one.
2. Erect, it stands on either side.
3. The man can shoot, you see his gun.
4. Shelter from rain this will provide.
5. A golden coin, a king, supreme.
6. A kind of cloth, a British stream.

PAX.

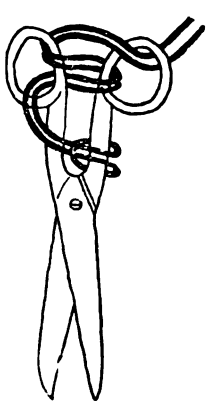
1.	A	m i s	S
2.	U	p r i g h	T
3.	G	u n n e	R
4.	U	m b r e l l	A
5.	S	o v e r e i g	N
6.	T	w e e	D

"Olla" is accepted for the second light of No. 155.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.



819.—THE ENTANGLED SCISSORS.

I HAVE been asked to give the old scissors and string puzzle, so I present it in the form in which I was acquainted with it in my youth. The illustration will show how the string should be entangled in the scissors, and if you start at the loop on the left side the double string can readily be got into position. The puzzle is, of course, to let someone hold the two ends of the string while you disengage the scissors. I will just say that it is necessary that a good length of string should be used, to give you free play. I would also advise the reader to use a large pair of scissors and thick cord that will slide easily.

820.—GEOMETRICAL PROGRESSION.

CAN you write out a series of whole numbers in geometrical progression starting from 1, so that the numbers shall add up to a square? Thus, $1+2+4+8+16+32=63$, but this is just 1 short of being a square. I am only aware of two answers in whole numbers, and these will be found quite easy to discover.

821.—THE PUZZLE OF THE ICEMAN.

EVERY blank is to be filled with a word ending in "ice."

At the time of the summer ——, the iceman, whom

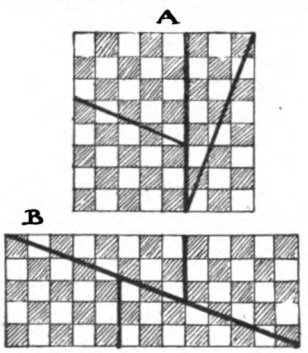
no one could accuse of —— or ——, put up a —— at an —— in his ——, to the effect that with —— toward none he would give good —— to all, without —— or ——.

Accordingly, he supplied the politician with ——, the lawyer with ——, the doctor with a ——, the judge with ——, the builder with a —— and a ——, the gambler and his —— in their den of —— with ——, the bridal party with ——, the clergyman with a ——, the cat with ——, the drinker with ——, the geologist with ——, the woodman with a ——, the sailor with a ——, the dentist with a ——, the dressmaker with a ——, and in no case stated the ——.

But in spite of all his efforts to supply ice to ——, some people objected so strongly to his —— that they applied to the —— for —— regarding a ——, by which they might either push him into a —— or over a ——!

822.—THE DISSECTED CHESSBOARD.

HERE is an ancient and familiar fallacy. If you cut a chessboard into four pieces in the manner indicated by the black lines in figure A and then reassemble



the pieces as in figure B you appear to gain a square by the operation, since this second figure would seem to contain $13 \times 5 = 65$ squares. I have explained this fallacy over and over again, and the reader probably understands all about it. The present puzzle is to place the same four pieces together in another way so that it may appear, to the novice, that instead of gaining a square we have lost one, the new figure apparently containing only 63 cells. It is best to use a diagram that is not chequered in black and white cells.

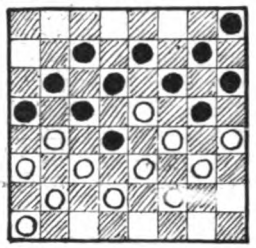
823.—MAXIMUM MOVES IN CHESS.

EVERYBODY knows that when the pieces are set up on a chessboard for a game White has the option of 20 different moves, since every pawn can advance 1 or 2 squares and each knight can play to either of two squares. The puzzle is to set up a position on the chessboard with all the 32 pieces, in a possible (however improbable) position, so that White shall in that position have the option of the maximum number of possible moves. What that maximum is I am not able to state, but I will show, next month, my own record. It is quite likely that some clever reader may be able to beat it. In the meantime, what is the best you can do?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

815.—THE SHORTEST DRAUGHTS GAME.

PLAY as follows. Readers will remember that Black's moves are hyphenated.



(1) 23 19, 10-14; (2) 22 17, 14-18; (3) 19 15, 7-10; (4) 24 19, 11-16; (5) 26 23, 9-14; (6) 28 24, 3-7; (7) 24 20, 7-11; (8) 31 26, 5-9; (9) 26 22, 1-5; (10) 32 28, 9-13; (11) 28 24, 5-9; (12) 30 26, 2-7 wins. The diagram shows the final position.

816.—THE BARMAN'S PUZZLE.

THE man must have had $5\frac{1}{4}$d. He received $5\frac{1}{4}$d. from the first barman, spent 6d., and left with $4\frac{1}{2}$d. He received from the second barman $4\frac{1}{2}$d., spent 6d., and left with 3d. Finally he received from the third barman 3d., spent 6d., and had nothing left.

817.—THE PAPER RIBBON.

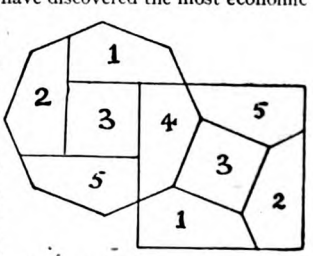
IMAGINE the roll to be composed of a series of concentric rings of ribbon. As the paper is $\frac{1}{250}$inch in thickness there will be 750 of these ribbon rings in the 3 inches thickness. The circumference of the smallest ring is 6.2831853 inches and that of the largest ring 25.1327412 inches. Add these together and multiply by 375 (half of 750) and we get the result 11780.972445 inches, which is 327yds. 0ft. 9in., the approximate length of the rolled ribbon.

818.—SUNRISE AND SUNSET.

THE words in their order are: LEAPS, PALES, SEPAL, PLEAS, LAPSE, PEALS, PLEASE, ASLEEP.

797.—OCTAGON TO SQUARE.

AS I have often remarked, concerning these Cutting-out puzzles, there is generally no way of determining positively that you have discovered the most economic solution possible. The solution to this puzzle, in seven pieces, that I gave in our May issue, was the best then known, but the record has soon been beaten, for I have received from Dr. G. T. Bennett this very simple and elegant solution in as few as five pieces. I do not think this can possibly be beaten.



Mr. Dudeney's new book, "Modern Puzzles" (price 3/6), is now ready and may be obtained from all booksellers, or direct from the publishers, Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.2, for 3/10, post free.

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for October, 1926.

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The characters and names in the stories in "The Strand Magazine" are entirely imaginary and have no reference to real persons.

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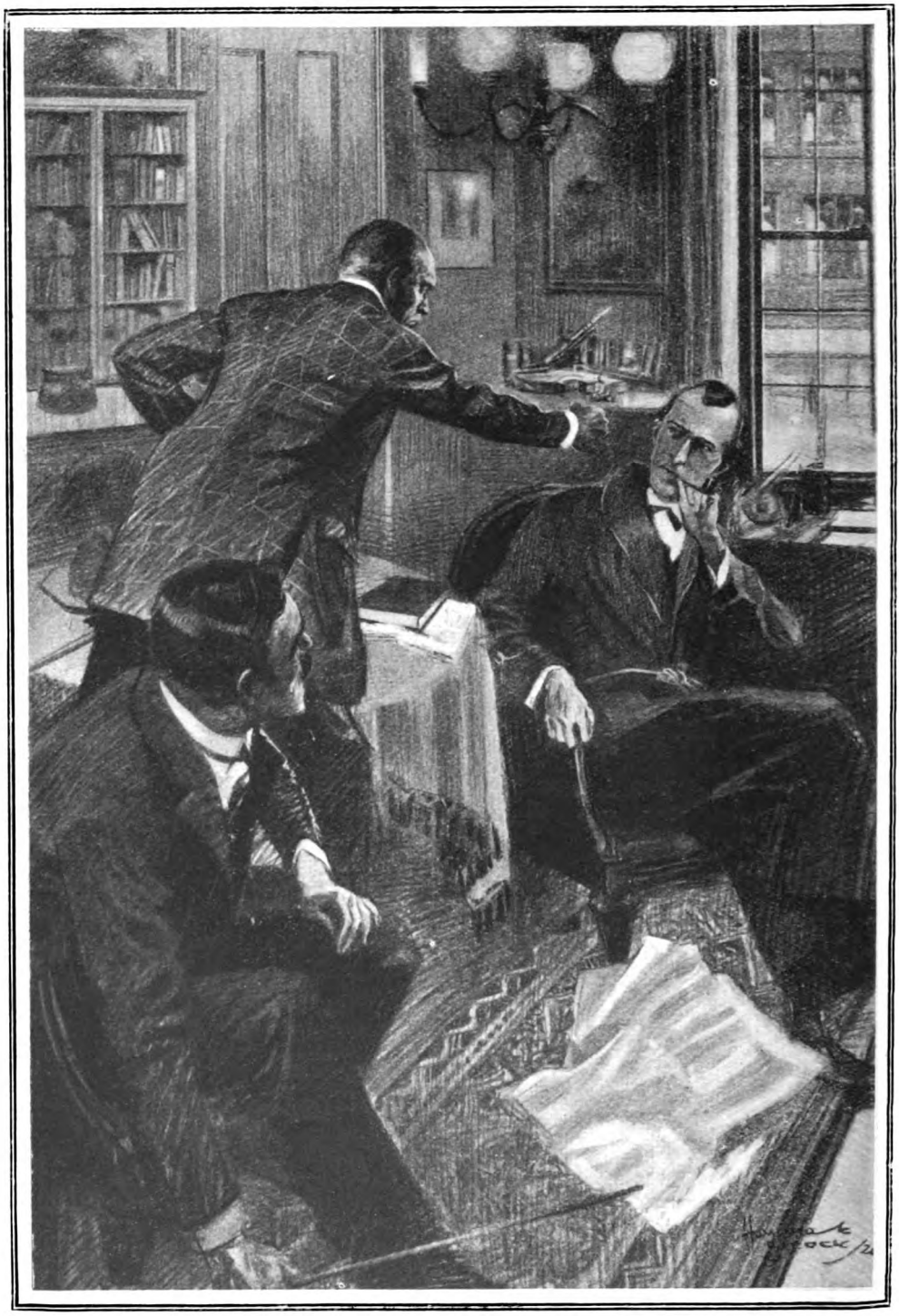
OCTOBER, 1926.



"SEE HERE, MR. HOLMES, YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OUT OF OTHER FOLKS' BUSINESS. LEAVE FOLKS TO MANAGE THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. GOT THAT, MR. HOLMES?"

(See page 319.)

THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES

THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE GABLES

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

BY

A. Conan Doyle

Illustrated by
HOWARD ELCOCK

I DON'T think that any of my adventures with Mr. Sherlock Holmes opened quite so abruptly, or so dramatically, as that which I associate with The Three Gables. I had not seen Holmes for some days, and had no idea of the new channel into which his activities had been directed. He was in a chatty mood that morning, however, and had just settled me into the well-worn low arm-chair on one side of the fire, while he had curled down with his pipe in his mouth upon the opposite chair, when our visitor arrived. If I had said that a mad bull had arrived, it would give a clearer impression of what occurred.

The door had flown open and a huge negro had burst into the room. He would have been a comic figure if he had not been terrific, for he was dressed in a very loud grey check suit with a flowing salmon-coloured tie. His broad face and flattened nose were thrust forward, as his sullen dark eyes, with a smouldering gleam of malice in them, turned from one of us to the other.

"Which of you genelmen is Masser Holmes?" he asked.

Holmes raised his pipe with a languid smile.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" said our visitor, coming with an unpleasant, stealthy step round the angle of the table. "See here, Mr. Holmes, you keep your hands out of other folks' business. Leave folks to manage their own affairs. Got that, Mr. Holmes?"

"Keep on talking," said Holmes. "It's fine."

"Oh! it's fine, is it?" growled the savage. "It won't be so damn fine if I have to trim you up a bit. I've handled your kind before now, and they didn't look fine when I was through with them. Look at that, Mr. Holmes!"

He swung a huge knotted lump of a fist under my friend's nose. Holmes examined it closely with an air of great interest. "Were you born so?" he asked. "Or did it come by degrees?"

It may have been the icy coolness of my friend, or it may have been the slight clatter which I made as I picked up the poker. In any case, our visitor's manner became less flamboyant.

"Well, I've given you fair warnin',"

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said he. "I've a friend that's interested out Harrow way—you know what I'm meaning—and he don't intend to have no buttin' in by you. Got that? You ain't the law, and I ain't the law either, and if you come in I'll be on hand also. Don't you forget it."

"I've wanted to meet you for some time," said Holmes. "I won't ask you to sit down for I don't like the smell of you, but aren't you Steve Dixie, the bruiser?"

"That's my name, Masser Holmes, and you'll get put through it for sure if you give me any lip."

"It is certainly the last thing you need," said Holmes, staring at our visitor's hideous mouth. "But it was the killing of young Perkins outside the Holborn Bar—— What! you're not going?"

The negro had sprung back, and his face was leaden. "I won't listen to no such talk," said he. "What have I to do with this 'ere Perkins, Masser Holmes? I was trainin' at the Bull Ring in Birmingham when this boy done gone get into trouble."

"Yes, you'll tell the magistrate about it, Steve," said Holmes. "I've been watching you and Barney Stockdale——"

"So help me the Lord! Masser Holmes——"

"That's enough. Get out of it. I'll pick you up when I want you."

"Good mornin', Masser Holmes. I hope there ain't no hard feelin's about this 'ere visit?"

"There will be unless you tell me who sent you."

"Why, there ain't no secret about that, Masser Holmes. It was that same genelman that you have just done gone mention."

"And who set him on to it?"

"S'elp me! I don't know, Masser Holmes. He just say, 'Steve, you go see Mr. Holmes, and tell him his life ain't safe if he go down Harrow way.' That's the whole truth."

Without waiting for any further questioning, our visitor bolted out of the room almost as precipitately as he had entered. Holmes knocked out the ashes of his pipe with a quiet chuckle.

"I am glad you were not forced to break his woolly head, Watson. I observed your manœuvres with the poker. But he is really rather a harmless fellow, a great muscular, foolish, blustering baby, and easily cowed, as you have seen. He is one of the Spencer John gang, and has taken part in some dirty work of late which I may clear up when I have time. His immediate principal, Barney, is a more astute person. They specialize in assaults, intimidation, and the like. What I want to know is, who is at the back of them on this particular occasion?"

"But why do they want to intimidate you?"

"It is this Harrow Weald case. It decides me to look into the matter, for if it is worth anyone's while to take so much trouble, there must be something in it."

"But what is it?"

"I was going to tell you when we had this comic interlude. Here is Mrs. Maberley's note. If you care to come with me we will wire her and go out at once."

"*Dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes,*" (I read)

"*I have had a succession of strange incidents occur to me in connection with this house, and I should much value your advice. You would find me at home any time to-morrow. The house is within a short walk of the Weald Station. I believe that my late husband, Mortimer Maberley, was one of your early clients.*

"*Yours faithfully,*

"MARY MABERLEY."

The address was "The Three Gables, Harrow Weald."

"So that's that!" said Holmes. "And now, if you can spare the time, Watson, we will get upon our way."

A SHORT railway journey, and a shorter drive, brought us to the house, a brick and timber villa, standing in its own acre of undeveloped grassland. Three small projections above the upper windows made a feeble attempt to justify its name. Behind was a grove of melancholy, half-grown pines, and the whole aspect of the place was poor and depressing. None the less, we found the house to be well furnished, and the lady who received us was a most engaging elderly person, who bore every mark of refinement and culture.

"I remember your husband well, madam," said Holmes, "though it is some years since he used my services in some trifling matter."

"Probably you would be more familiar with the name of my son Douglas."

Holmes looked at her with great interest.

"Dear me! Are you the mother of Douglas Maberley? I knew him slightly. But, of course, all London knew him. What a magnificent creature he was! Where is he now?"

"Dead, Mr. Holmes, dead! He was Attaché at Rome, and he died there of pneumonia last month."

"I am sorry. One could not connect death with such a man. I have never known anyone so vitally alive. He lived intensely—every fibre of him!"

"Too intensely, Mr. Holmes. That was the ruin of him. You remember him as he was—debonair and splendid. You did not

see the moody, morose, brooding creature into which he developed. His heart was broken. In a single month I seemed to see my gallant boy turn into a worn-out, cynical man."

"A love affair—a woman?"

"Or a fiend. Well, it was not to talk of my poor lad that I asked you to come, Mr. Holmes."

"Dr. Watson and I are at your service."

"There have been some very strange happenings. I have been in this house more than a year now, and as I wished to lead a retired life I have seen little of my neighbours. Three days ago I had a call from a man who said that he was a house agent. He said that this house would exactly suit a client of his, and that if I would part with it money would be no object. It seemed to me very strange, as there are several empty houses on the market which appear to be equally eligible, but naturally I was interested in what he said. I therefore named a price which was five hundred pounds more than I gave. He at once closed with the offer, but added that his client desired to buy the furniture as well, and would I put a price upon it. Some of this furniture is from my old home, and it is, as you see, very good, so that I named a good round sum. To this also he at once agreed. I had always wanted to travel, and the bargain was so good a one that it really seemed that I should be my own mistress for the rest of my life.

"Yesterday the man arrived with the agreement all drawn out. Luckily I showed it to Mr. Sutro, my lawyer, who lives in Harrow. He said to me, 'This is a very strange document. Are you aware that if you sign it you could not legally take *anything* out of the house—not even your own private possessions?' When the man came again in the evening I pointed this out, and I said that I meant only to sell the furniture.

"'No, no; everything,' said he.

"'But my clothes? My jewels?'

"'Well, well, some concession might be made for your personal effects. But nothing shall go out of the house unchecked. My client is a very liberal man, but he has his fads and his own way of doing things. It is everything or nothing with him.'

"'Then it must be nothing,' said I. And there the matter was left, but the whole thing seemed to me to be so unusual that I thought——"

HERE we had a very extraordinary interruption.

Holmes raised his hand for silence. Then he strode across the room, flung open the door, and dragged in a great gaunt woman whom he had seized by the shoulder. She entered with ungainly struggles, like some huge awkward chicken, torn squawking out of its coop.

"Leave me alone! What are you a-doin' of?" she screeched.

"Why, Susan, what is this?"

"Well, ma'am, I was comin' in to ask if the visitors was stayin' for lunch when this man jumped out at me."

"I have been listening to her for the last five minutes, but did not wish to interrupt your most interesting narrative. Just a little wheezy, Susan, are you not? You breathe too heavily for that kind of work."

Susan turned a sulky but amazed face upon her captor. "Who be you, anyhow, and what right have you a-pullin' me about like this?"

"It was merely that I wished to ask a question in your presence. Did you, Mrs. Maberley, mention to anyone that you were going to write to me and consult me?"

"No, Mr. Holmes, I did not."

"Who posted your letter?"

"Susan did."

"Exactly. Now, Susan, to whom was it that you wrote or sent a message to say that your mistress was asking advice from me?"

"It's a lie. I sent no message."

"Now, Susan, wheezy people may not live long, you know. It's a wicked thing to tell fibs. Whom did you tell?"

"Susan!" cried her mistress, "I believe you are a bad, treacherous woman. I remember now that I saw you speaking to someone over the hedge."

"That was my own business," said the woman sullenly.

"Suppose I tell you that it was Barney Stockdale to whom you spoke?" said Holmes.

"Well, if you know, what do you want to ask for?"

"I was not sure, but I know now. Well now, Susan, it will be worth ten pounds to you if you will tell me who is at the back of Barney."

"Someone that could lay down a thousand pounds for every ten you have in the world."

"So, a rich man? No; you smiled—a rich woman. Now we have got so far, you may as well give the name and earn the tenner."

"I'll see you in hell first."

"Oh, Susan! Language!"

"I am clearing out of here. I've had enough of you all. I'll send for my box to-morrow." She flounced for the door.

"Good-bye, Susan. Paregoric is the stuff. . . . Now," he continued, turning suddenly from lively to severe when the door had

closed behind the flushed and angry woman, "this gang means business. Look how close they play the game. Your letter to me had the ten p.m. postmark. And yet Susan passes the word to Barney. Barney has time to go to his employer and get instructions; he or she—I incline to the latter from Susan's grin when she thought I had blundered—forms a plan. Black Steve is called in, and I am warned off by eleven o'clock next morning. That's quick work, you know."

"But what do they want?"

"Yes, that's the question. Who had the house before you?"

"A retired sea captain, called Ferguson."

"Anything remarkable about him?"

"Not that ever I heard of."

"I was wondering whether he could have buried something. Of course, when people bury treasure nowadays they do it in the Post Office bank. But there are always some lunatics about. It would be a dull world without them. At first I thought of some buried valuable. But why, in that case, should they want your furniture? You don't happen to have a Raphael or a first folio Shakespeare without knowing it?"

"No, I don't think I have anything rarer than a Crown Derby tea-set."

"That would hardly justify all this mystery. Besides, why should they not openly state what they want? If they covet your tea-pot, they can surely offer a price for it without buying you out, lock, stock, and barrel. No, as I read it, there is something which you do not know that you have, and which you would not give up if you did know."

"That is how I read it," said I.

"Dr. Watson agrees, so that settles it."

"Well, Mr. Holmes, what can it be?"

"Let us see whether by this purely mental analysis we can get it to a finer point. You have been in this house a year."

"Nearly two."

"All the better. During this long period no one wants anything from you. Now suddenly within three or four days you have urgent demands. What would you gather from that?"

"It can only mean," said I, "that the object, whatever it may be, has only just come into the house."

"Settled once again," said Holmes. "Now, Mrs. Maberley, has any object just arrived?"

"No; I have bought nothing new this year."

"Indeed! That is very remarkable. Well, I think we had best let matters develop a little further until we have clearer data. Is that lawyer of yours a capable man?"

"Mr. Sutro is most capable."

"Have you another maid, or was the fair Susan, who has just banged your front door, alone?"

"I have a young girl."

"Try and get Sutro to spend a night or two in the house. You might possibly want protection."

"Against whom?"

"Who knows? The matter is certainly obscure. If I can't find what they are after, I must approach the matter from the other end, and try to get at the principal. Did this house-agent man give any address?"

"Simply his card and occupation. Haines-Johnson, Auctioneer and Valuer."

"I don't think we shall find him in the Directory. Honest business men don't conceal their place of business. Well, you will let me know any fresh development. I have taken up your case, and you may rely upon it that I shall see it through."

As we passed through the hall Holmes's eyes, which missed nothing, lighted upon several trunks and cases which were piled in the corner. The labels shone out upon them.

"'Milano.' 'Lucerne.' These are from Italy."

"They are poor Douglas's things."

"You have not unpacked them? How long have you had them?"

"They arrived last week."

"But you said—why, surely this might be the missing link. How do we know that there is not something of value there?"

"There could not possibly be, Mr. Holmes. Poor Douglas had only his pay and a small annuity. What could he have of value?"

Holmes was lost in thought.

"Delay no longer, Mrs. Maberley," he said at last. "Have these things taken upstairs to your bedroom. Examine them as soon as possible and see what they contain. I will come to-morrow and hear your report."

IT was quite evident that The Three Gables was under very close surveillance, for as we came round the high hedge at the end of the lane there was the negro prize-fighter standing in the shadow. We came on him quite suddenly, and a grim and menacing figure he looked in that lonely place. Holmes clapped his hand to his pocket.

"Lookin' for your gun, Masser Holmes?"

"No; for my scent-bottle, Steve."

"You are funny, Masser Holmes, ain't you?"

"It won't be funny for you, Steve, if I get after you. I gave you fair warning this morning."

"Well, Masser Holmes, I done gone think over what you said, and I don't want no more talk about that affair of Masser

Holmes flung open the door and dragged in a great gaunt woman whom he had seized by the shoulder.

Perkins. S'pose I can help you, Masser Holmes, I will."

"Well, then, tell me who is behind you on this job?"

"So help me the Lord! Masser Holmes, I told you the truth before. I don't know. My boss Barney gives me orders and that's all."

"Well, just bear in mind, Steve, that the lady in that house, and everything under that roof, is under my protection. Don't you forget it."

"All right, Masser Holmes. I'll remember."

"I've got him thoroughly frightened for his own skin, Watson," Holmes remarked as we walked on. "I think he would double-cross his employer if he knew who he was. It was lucky I had some knowledge of the Spencer John crowd, and that Steve was one of them. Now, Watson, this is a case for Langdale Pike, and I am going to see him now. When I get back I may be clearer in the matter."

I SAW no more of Holmes during the day, but I could well imagine how he spent it, for Langdale Pike was his human book of reference upon all matters of social scandal. This strange, languid creature spent his waking hours in the bow window of a St. James's Street club, and was the receiving-station, as well as the transmitter, for all the gossip of the Metropolis. He made, it was said, a four-figure income by the paragraphs which he contributed every week to the garbage papers which cater for an inquisitive public. If ever, far down in the turbid depths of London life, there was some strange swirl or eddy, it was marked with automatic exactness by this human dial upon the surface. Holmes discreetly helped Langdale to knowledge, and on occasion was helped in turn.

When I met my friend in his room early next morning, I was conscious from his bearing that all was well, but none the less a most unpleasant surprise was awaiting us. It took the shape of the following telegram:

"Please come out at once. Client's house burgled in the night. Police in possession.

"SUTRO."

Holmes whistled. "The drama has come to a crisis, and quicker than I had expected. There is a great driving-power at the back of this business, Watson, which does not surprise me after what I have heard. This Sutro, of course, is her lawyer. I made a mistake, I fear, in not asking you to spend the night on guard. This fellow has clearly proved a broken reed. Well, there is nothing for it but another journey to Harrow Weald."

We found The Three Gables a very different establishment to the orderly household of the previous day. A small group of idlers had assembled at the garden gate, while a couple of constables were examining the windows and the geranium beds. Within we met a grey old gentleman, who introduced himself as the lawyer, together with a bustling, rubicund Inspector, who greeted Holmes as an old friend.

"Well, Mr. Holmes, no chance for you in this case, I'm afraid. Just a common, ordinary burglary, and well within the capacity of the poor old police. No experts need apply."

"I am sure the case is in very good hands," said Holmes. "Merely a common burglary, you say?"

"Quite so. We know pretty well who the men are and where to find them. It is that gang of Barney Stockdale, with the big nigger in it—they've been seen about here."

"Excellent! What did they get?"

"Well, they don't seem to have got much. Mrs. Maberley was chloroformed and the house was—— Ah! here is the lady herself."

Our friend of yesterday, looking very pale and ill, had entered the room, leaning upon a little maid-servant.

"You gave me good advice, Mr. Holmes," said she, smiling ruefully. "Alas, I did not take it! I did not wish to trouble Mr. Sutro, and so I was unprotected."

"I only heard of it this morning," the lawyer explained.

"Mr. Holmes advised me to have some friend in the house. I neglected his advice, and I have paid for it."

"You look wretchedly ill," said Holmes. "Perhaps you are hardly equal to telling me what occurred."

"It is all here," said the Inspector, tapping a bulky notebook.

"Still, if the lady is not too exhausted——"

"There is really so little to tell. I have no doubt that wicked Susan had planned an entrance for them. They must have known the house to an inch. I was conscious for a moment of the chloroform rag which was thrust over my mouth, but I have no notion how long I may have been senseless. When I woke, one man was at the bedside and another was rising with a bundle in his hand from among my son's baggage, which was partially opened and littered over the floor. Before he could get away I sprang up and seized him."

"You took a big risk," said the Inspector.

"I clung to him, but he shook me off, and the other may have struck me, for I can remember no more. Mary the maid heard the noise and began screaming out of the window. That brought the police, but the rascals had got away."

" What did they take ? "

" Well, I don't think there is anything of value missing. I am sure there was nothing in my son's trunks."

" Did the men leave no clue ? "

" There was one sheet of paper which I may have torn from the man that I grasped. It was lying all crumpled on the floor. It is in my son's handwriting."

" Which means that it is not of much use," said the Inspector. " Now if it had been in the burglar's——"

" Exactly," said Holmes. " What rugged common sense ! None the less, I should be curious to see it."

The Inspector drew a folded sheet of foolscap from his pocket-book.

" I never pass anything, however trifling," said he with some pomposity. " That is my advice to you, Mr. Holmes. In twenty-five years' experience I have learned my lesson. There is always the chance of finger-marks or something."

Holmes inspected the sheet of paper.

" What do you make of it, Inspector ? "

" Seems to be the end of some queer novel, so far as I can see."

" It may certainly prove to be the end of a queer tale," said Holmes. " You have noticed the number on the top of the page. It is two hundred and forty-five. Where are the odd two hundred and forty-four pages ? "

" Well, I suppose the burglars got those. Much good may it do them ! "

" It seems a queer thing to break into a house in order to steal such papers as that. Does it suggest anything to you, Inspector ? "

" Yes, sir ; it suggests that in their hurry the rascals just grabbed at what came first to hand. I wish them joy of what they got."

" Why should they go to my son's things ?" asked Mrs. Maberley.

" Well, they found nothing valuable downstairs, so they tried their luck upstairs. That is how I read it. What do you make of it, Mr. Holmes ? "

" I must think it over, Inspector. Come to the window, Watson." Then, as we stood together, he read over the fragment of paper. It began in the middle of a sentence and ran like this :—

" . . . face bled considerably from the cuts and blows, but it was nothing to the bleeding of his heart as he saw that lovely face, the face for which he had been prepared to sacrifice his very life, looking out at his agony and humiliation. She smiled—yes, by Heaven ! she smiled, like the heartless fiend she was, as he looked

We came on the negro prize-fighter quite suddenly, and a grim and menacing figure he looked in that lonely place.

up at her. It was at that moment that love died and hate was born. Man must live for something. If it is not for your embrace, my lady, then it shall surely be for your undoing and my complete revenge."

"Queer grammar!" said Holmes, with a smile, as he handed the paper back to the Inspector. "Did you notice how the 'he' suddenly changed to 'my.' The writer was so carried away by his own story that he imagined himself at the supreme moment to be the hero."

"It seemed mighty poor stuff," said the Inspector, as he replaced it in his book. "What! are you off, Mr. Holmes?"

"I don't think there is anything more for me to do now that the case is in such capable hands. By the way, Mrs. Maberley, did you say you wished to travel?"

"It has always been my dream, Mr. Holmes."

"Where would you like to go—Cairo, Madeira, the Riviera?"

"Oh! if I had the money I would go round the world."

"Quite so. Round the world. Well, good morning. I may drop you a line in the evening." As we passed the window I caught a glimpse of the Inspector's smile and shake of the head. "These clever fellows have always a touch of madness." That was what I read in the Inspector's smile.

"Now, Watson, we are at the last lap of our little journey," said Holmes, when we were back in the roar of Central London once more. "I think we had best clear the matter up at once, and it would be well that you should come with me, for it is safer to have a witness when you are dealing with such a lady as Isadora Klein."

We had taken a cab and were speeding to some address in Grosvenor Square. Holmes had been sunk in thought, but he roused himself suddenly.

"By the way, Watson, I suppose you see it all clearly?"

"No, I can't say that I do. I only gather that we are going to see the lady who is behind all this mischief."

"Exactly! But does the name Isadora Klein convey nothing to you? She was, of course, *the* celebrated beauty. There was never a woman to touch her. She is pure Spanish, the real blood of the masterful Conquistadors, and her people have been leaders in Pernambuco for generations. She married the aged German sugar king, Klein, and presently found herself the richest as well as the most lovely widow upon earth. Then there was an interval of adventure when she pleased her own tastes. She had several lovers, and Douglas Maberley, one of the most striking men in London, was one of them. It was by all accounts more than an adventure with him. He was not a Society butterfly, but a strong, proud man who gave and expected all. But she is the '*belle dame sans merci*' of fiction. When her caprice is satisfied, the matter is ended, and if the other party in the matter can't take her word for it, she knows how to bring it home to him."

"Then that was his own story——"

"Ah! you are piecing it together now. I hear that she is about to marry the young Duke of Lomond, who might almost be her son. His Grace's ma might overlook the age, but a big scandal would be a different matter, so it is imperative—— Ah! here we are."

IT was one of the finest corner-houses of the West-end. A machine-like footman took up our cards and returned with word that the lady was not at home. "Then we shall wait until she is," said Holmes, cheerfully.

The machine broke down.

"Not at home means not at home to *you*," said the footman.

"Good," Holmes answered. "That means that we shall not have to wait. Kindly give this note to your mistress."

He scribbled three or four words upon a sheet of his notebook, folded it, and handed it to the man.

"What did you say, Holmes?" I asked.

"I simply wrote 'Shall it be the police, then?' I think that should pass us in."

It did—with amazing celerity. A minute later we were in an Arabian-night drawing-room, vast and wonderful, in a half gloom, picked out with an occasional pink electric light. The lady had come, I felt, to that time of life when even the proudest beauty finds the half-light more welcome. She rose from a settee as we entered; tall, queenly, a perfect figure, a lovely mask-like face, with two wonderful Spanish eyes which looked murder at us both.

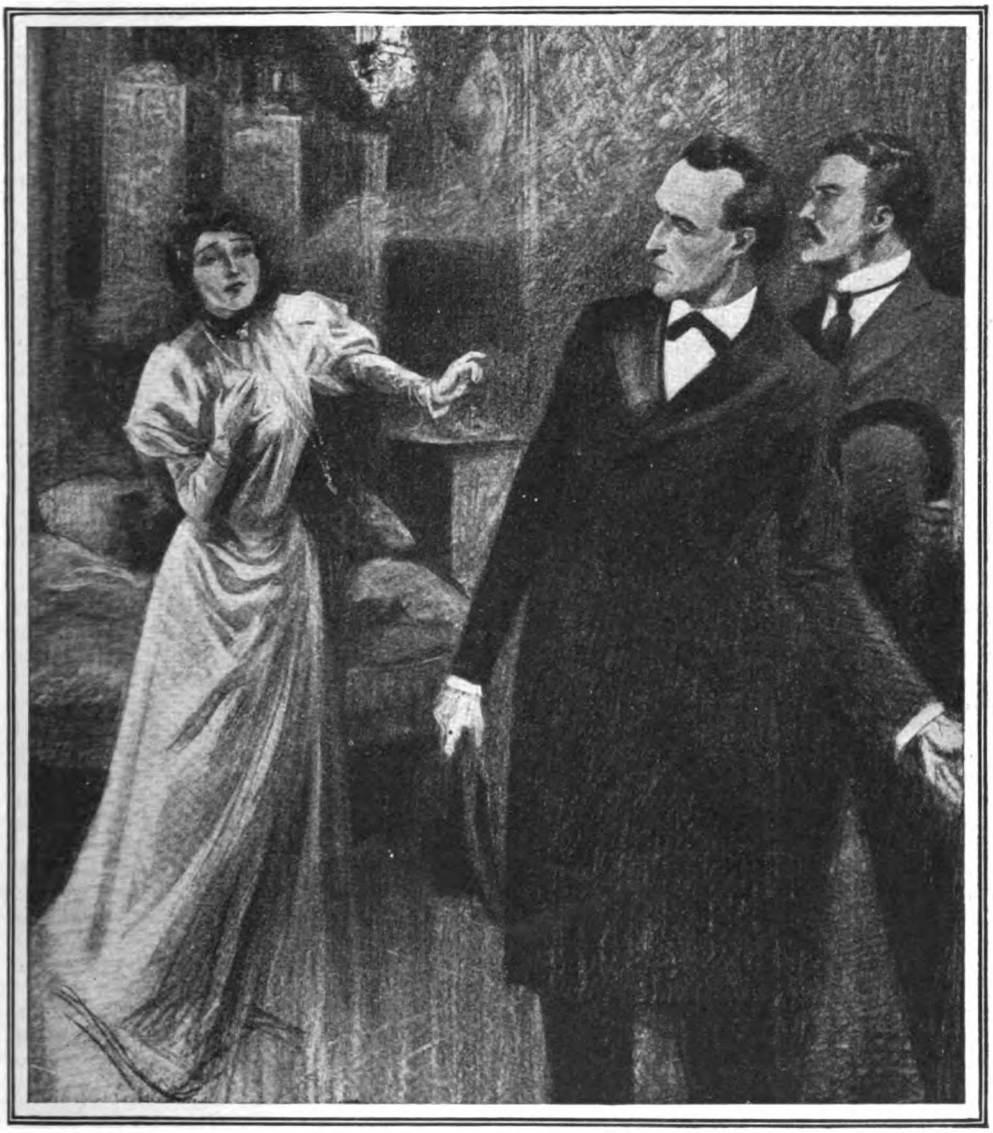
"What is this intrusion—and this insulting message?" she asked, holding up the slip of paper.

"I need not explain, madame. I have too much respect for your intelligence to do so—though I confess that intelligence has been surprisingly at fault of late."

"How so, sir?"

"By supposing that your hired bullies could frighten me from my work. Surely no man would take up my profession if it were not that danger attracts him. It was you, then, who forced me to examine the case of young Maberley."

"I have no idea what you are talking about. What have I to do with hired bullies?"



"Stop! Where are you going?"
"To Scotland Yard."

Holmes turned away wearily.

"Yes, I have underrated your intelligence. Well, good afternoon!"

"Stop! Where are you going?"

"To Scotland Yard."

We had not got half-way to the door before she had overtaken us and was holding his arm. She had turned in a moment from steel to velvet.

"Come and sit down, gentlemen. Let us talk this matter over. I feel that I may be frank with you, Mr. Holmes. You have the feelings of a gentleman. How quick a woman's instinct is to find it out! I will treat you as a friend."

"I cannot promise to reciprocate, madame. I am not the law, but I represent justice so far as my feeble powers go. I am ready to listen, and then I will tell you how I will act."

"No doubt it was foolish of me to threaten a brave man like yourself."

"What was really foolish, madame, is that you have placed yourself in the power

of a band of rascals who may blackmail or give you away."

"No, no! I am not so simple. Since I have promised to be frank, I may say that no one, save Barney Stockdale and Susan, his wife, have the least idea who their employer is. As to them, well, it is not the first——" She smiled and nodded, with a charming coquettish intimacy.

"I see. You've tested them before."

"They are good hounds who run silent."

"Such hounds have a way sooner or later of biting the hand that feeds them. They will be arrested for this burglary. The police are already after them."

"They will take what comes to them. That is what they are paid for. I shall not appear in the matter."

"Unless I bring you into it."

"No, no; you would not. You are a gentleman. It is a woman's secret."

"In the first place you must give back this manuscript."

She broke into a ripple of laughter, and walked to the fireplace. There was a calcined mass which she broke up with the poker. "Shall I give this back?" she asked. So roguish and exquisite did she look as she stood before us with a challenging smile that I felt of all Holmes's criminals this was the one whom he would find it hardest to face. However, he was immune from sentiment.

"That seals your fate," he said coldly. "You are very prompt in your actions, madame, but you have overdone it on this occasion."

She threw the poker down with a clatter.

"How hard you are!" she cried. "May I tell you the whole story?"

"I fancy I could tell it to you."

"But you must look at it with my eyes, Mr. Holmes. You must realize it from the point of view of a woman who sees all her life's ambition about to be ruined at the last moment. Is such a woman to be blamed if she protects herself?"

"The original sin was yours."

"Yes, yes! I admit it. He was a dear boy, Douglas, but it so chanced that he could not fit into my plans. He wanted marriage—marriage, Mr. Holmes—with a penniless commoner. Nothing less would serve him. Then he became pertinacious. Because I had given he seemed to think that I still must give, and to him only. It was intolerable. At last I had to make him realize it."

"By hiring ruffians to beat him under your own window."

"You do indeed seem to know everything. Well, it is true. Barney and the boys drove him away, and were, I admit, a little rough in doing so. But what did he do then? Could I have believed that a gentleman would do such an act? He wrote a book in which he described his own story. I, of course, was the wolf; he the lamb. It was all there, under different names, of course; but who in all London would have failed to recognize it? What do you say to that, Mr. Holmes?"

"Well, he was within his rights."

"It was as if the air of Italy had got into his blood and brought with it the old cruel Italian spirit. He wrote to me and sent me a copy of his book that I might have the torture of anticipation. There were two copies, he said—one for me, one for his publisher."

"How did you know the publisher's had not reached him?"

"I knew who his publisher was. It is not his only novel, you know. I found out that he had not heard from Italy. Then came Douglas's sudden death. So long as that other manuscript was in the world there was no safety for me. Of course, it must be among his effects, and these would be returned to his mother. I set the gang at work. One of them got into the house as servant. I wanted to do the thing honestly. I really and truly did. I was ready to buy the house and everything in it. I offered any price she cared to ask. I only tried the other way when everything else had failed. Now, Mr. Holmes, granting that I was too hard on Douglas—and, God knows, I am sorry for it!—what else could I do with my whole future at stake?"

Sherlock Holmes shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, well," said he, "I suppose I shall have to compound a felony as usual. How much does it cost to go round the world in first-class style?"

The lady stared in amazement.

"Could it be done on five thousand pounds?"

"Well, I should think so, indeed!"

"Very good. I think you will sign me a cheque for that, and I will see that it comes to Mrs. Maberley. You owe her a little change of air. Meantime, lady"—he wagged a cautionary forefinger—"have a care! Have a care! You can't play with edged tools for ever without cutting those dainty hands."

Next month: "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier."

"UP TOP"

by

DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

ONE observes that they have recently taken to building roofs over the upper decks of the London omnibuses—"experimentally," we are informed by those responsible for the innovation, "and in order to ascertain whether this will meet with the general approval of the travelling public as a whole."

We feel awfully bucked with ourselves when we read a paragraph like that. For we, of course, are the general travelling public as a whole. The change has been introduced simply in the hope of pleasing us. If we say it is a good change, then the omnibus authorities will work overtime covering the rest of their fleet; and if we say it is a bad change, then they will instantly tear all those new tops off again and throw them on to the dust-heap. Our word in this affair is law, and they are only waiting to hear what it is.

Our exhilaration diminishes, however, when we find—as we do—that it is also an affair on which we are totally unable to make up our minds. In cold weather, or in wet weather, or when we are coming home from our offices and want to read our evening newspapers, we are, as the saying goes, all in favour. "Of course," we say. "Cover the remaining omnibuses as quickly as you can, and accept our grateful thanks for all that this will mean to us."

And then the summer comes round again, and it is Saturday afternoon, and we want to go to Hampton Court or Hadley Woods. At once we are as *con* as we were previously *pro*. "Remove those roofs and glass windows," we clamour. "Give us back our sunlight, our fresh air, and our uninterrupted view of the London panorama. Is this the way to compete with those odious trams?"

Well, it's just possible that by the time these words appear in print the great question will have been settled; that the omnibus authorities will in some miraculous way have discovered what the travelling public as a whole is most certainly unable to discover for itself—whether it wants those roofs to remain or to go. For ourselves, though we shall doubtless by that time have conducted many passionate arguments on both sides, we are frankly reluctant to prophesy as to the upshot. But in the event of the covered buses gaining the day, and the public memory—which is so short and fickle—forgetting that the streets of London were ever obstructed by anything else, we wish to state that the episodes in the following story took place when the upper decks of all railless metropolitan stage-carriages were still open to the bright blue or dull grey sky, and some time before this insoluble problem of bus-architecture was flung so confusingly into our midst.

It is a matter of atmosphere, which writers naturally regard as of great importance, and we hope that you will bear the fact in mind.

In those days B. W. Aitchison—who has since entered the ranks of the successful, and markets the products of his imagination and his typewriter in two continents, and is perpetually turning down commissions from editors, publishers, theatrical managers, and film studios, and has a six-cylinder car and a country cottage, and is envied by all, admired by many, and respected by quite a few—in those days, we would have you know, B. W. Aitchison lived in furnished lodgings in a depressing street in Pimlico.

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A bed-sitting-room was B. W. Aitchison's kingdom in those days, and there he toiled and also moiled. There he reviewed other people's novels, because nobody would buy his own. There he wrote articles for periodicals that hadn't asked for them, and generally speaking didn't want them. There he wooed at least five of the nine Muses in a desperate, serious, concentrated manner that left the flighty creatures as cold as Sunday supper. There he shuddered whenever the sound of a double-knock drifted up to his second-floor front—because he knew quite well that it was another of his manuscripts coming back—and there he thrust out his jaw and told himself night after night that he never regretted having left the bank, and that he'd show 'em all yet and be dashed to them. And there, in short, he underwent all the vexatious preliminaries to fame and success which (in conjunction with his large pipe) put those deep lines on each side of his mouth, and yet at the time offered no sort of guarantee that they would ever lead to anything but starvation and failure.

SOMETIMES B. W. Aitchison would wake up in the middle of the night and realize that he had made twenty-five shillings (less postage) in the last month, and that there were probably fifty thousand men and a hundred thousand women in this great city who were all trying to earn their living in exactly the same way. And a lifelike vision would present itself to him of the ten thousand men and the twenty thousand women who had somehow or other scrambled on to the plinth of the column of Fame, and were stamping on the knuckles of the besieging myriads who would have plucked them from even this insecure position.

And then B. W. Aitchison would utter a hollow and muffled groan, and ask himself whether it were indeed nothing but mulish obstinacy that kept him toiling and moiling away in this bed-sitting-room, and how on earth he could ever hope to overcome these countless competitors. But always after he had seen this vision and uttered that groan he would get up a little earlier than usual and work a little harder; so that whatever we may think of his successful stuff to-day—and a lot of it isn't half bad—we must at least admit that the car and the country cottage and all the other things didn't come without the most terrific industry and relentless effort. Whatever he is or was, Mr. Aitchison has never spared either his brain or his typewriter.

One of his chief difficulties in those days was in the matter of experience. He knew—and if he hadn't known, then he was continually reading and being told—that no writer could ever get anywhere without experience. But if one were working all day and most of the night in a Pimlico bed-sitting-room so as to keep the wolf from the door, then where was the experience to come from?

Of course, one learnt an enormous amount about the Pimlico bed-sitting-room, but this was a facet of life in which editors and the reading public seemed to take remarkably little interest. They wanted love, and passion, and Newmarket, and Monte Carlo, and South Sea Islands; and since B. W. Aitchison's entire knowledge of these subjects was drawn in those days from the novels which he was occasionally sent to review, and since the authors of the novels had generally derived their information from other novels which they had borrowed from their circulating libraries, by the time the facts got round to B. W. Aitchison they could hardly be regarded in the light of first-hand experience.

"If only," he would say to himself, "I'd ever met anyone. If only I'd ever been anywhere."

Meanwhile he went on writing dismally photographic stories about authors in bed-sitting-rooms, and singularly unconvincing stories about the love-affairs of dukes and duchesses. And as neither class was in the least what any editor wanted, the wonder was that he ever sold anything at all. One has to confess that it was more or less of an accident when he did.

Well, one day B. W. Aitchison sat in front of his typewriter and made the painful discovery that he had utterly exhausted the subject of authors in bed-sitting-rooms and that his imagination wholly refused to provide him with any particulars, however incredible, of the lives of the upper classes. A very hot sun was blazing in at his open window, a barrel-organ was playing selections from Italian opera in the street below, and from the back of the house came sounds of shunting and whistling from the sidings outside Victoria Station.

ALL these contributory causes had given Mr. Aitchison a splitting headache, which was in no way ameliorated by the smell of cooking that arose pervasively from his landlady's kitchen.

"It's no earthly use," he said, blankly, to himself. "The longer I sit here, the worse it all gets. I'm dashed," he said to himself, "if I don't chuck the whole thing and go out for a walk."

He hardly meant it, even then; for he was a serious young man with a conscience that always gave him trouble when his nose wasn't pressed against the grindstone—

whether the grindstone were revolving or not. But as he closed the door and sat down again, the fresh discovery that he was clean out of tobacco proved the last straw.

"I'm going out," he growled, threateningly, at his conscience. "So there!"

And this time he put on his hat, and flung a duster over the typewriter, and took a deep breath, and dashed downstairs through the smell of cooking, and emerged gasping into the street.

In those days the London barrel-organists had not yet evolved the system of planting an outpost on the opposite pavement, and B. W. Aitchison had no difficulty in withholding his support from Italian opera as he dodged quickly across the road and into the little tobacconist's shop.

"An ounce of Baffy's Mixture," he said, and while the old lady behind the counter was searching for it among the lollipops and picture-postcards and bootlaces on her crowded shelves, B. W. Aitchison's headache was aggravated by the sight of the numerous periodicals which were festooned all over the other wall.

"If only," he thought, sourly, "I could even write drivel like that! But I've never met anyone. I've never been anywhere. So how can I?"

And then, pocketing his ounce-packet of Baffy's Mixture, he passed out again on to the blistering pavement, and set off aimlessly along the dreary streets of his native Pimlico. Experience, bitter and gay, sardonic and light-hearted, tragic and farcical, was there on every side of him—if only he could have seen it, or have known how to translate it into episodes of five thousand words with a beginning, a middle, and an end. But the hidden barrier in his own mind, which no amount of mere typewriting could remove, continued to conceal it all. He saw nothing of any sort or description, until somebody suddenly shouted at him, and he looked up from his black dreams to find that he was in the middle of Victoria Station yard; and that he was on the point of being run over by a large scarlet omnibus.

HE skipped hastily to one side, achieved sanctuary on a small island of kerbstone, and a second large scarlet omnibus slid into position in front of him. Its conductor, at the fore end of the upper deck, was just reversing the destination board—causing it to present the words "Epping Forest," and in brackets (so as to convey the same information to a different public), "The Bald-Faced Roebuck."

An idea came to B. W. Aitchison, who had believed that no idea could ever come to him again. How would it be if he treated his splitting headache by a ride, in the open air, to this legendary Forest and back again? It would mean, for two reasons, doing without any lunch; but then he had his pipe and a whole ounce of Baffy's Mixture, which, though cheap, was extraordinarily satisfying.

It would, he suddenly decided, be very well indeed.

So he climbed up the narrow stairway at the back, and sank comfortably on to the rearmost seat on the left-hand side—which he preferred as being the least alarming position if the omnibus should go very fast, and was also far the most suitable for persons regaling themselves with Baffy's Mixture. And he filled his pipe, and he lit it; and though the headache was still very violent in this noisy, stifling yard, the knowledge that he would soon be moving through unknown streets to an unknown goal made it much easier to support. He pulled the brim of his hat more firmly over his eyes, in anticipation of the breeze which might yet be produced by the omnibus's motion, and, in defiance of the company's solicitous injunctions, hooked his left elbow over the edge of the bulwarks.

THEN somebody down below blew a whistle, and the omnibus began to palpitate. A moment or two of this, and then—with a sharp lurch forward that brought B. W. Aitchison's spine with some force against the back of his seat—it set off on its long journey. Trails of Baffy's Mixture streamed away behind it, and hung suspended over the hot yard in slowly-dissolving wreaths of grey and blue. Another large scarlet omnibus took the place that had just been vacated.

And next—at once, in fact—a short way from B. W. Aitchison's right ear, came the clear sound of a woman's voice.

"Oh, don't go inside!" she was calling out. "It's much cooler up top."

There was no audible response to this appeal.

"All right, then," said the same voice. "Don't, if you'd rather be suffocated. But *I'm* going up top."

B. W. Aitchison's critical intelligence rather approved the tone of the voice, but as a literary artist he didn't take to the phrase "up top." Colloquial and expressive it might well be, but it was most distinctly not English. It belonged to the same family as "I'll see you Wednesday" and "Help me hold this"—a species of confused compression which should be avoided even when writing dialogue. People who said "up top" were only a shade removed from people who said "up west" or "down under," and

a serious young author couldn't possibly take any further interest in them.

So B. W. Aitchison looked out at the green trees of Grosvenor Gardens, leaving the woman with the clear voice to conclude her argument in any kind of language that she thought fit. And when he looked back again—in the neighbourhood of Hyde Park Corner—his soul remained quite unstirred by the discovery that she had stuck to her point, and was now sitting about half-way up on the other side of the gangway. He noted that she was young and had rather an innocent back to her neck. But these observations were remote, cold-blooded, and soon forgotten. As a serious young man he would no more have thought of coughing or changing his seat, so as to see more of his fellow-passenger, than he would have considered learning how to dance. And in B. W. Aitchison's case—in those days, at any rate—one could hardly have put it more strongly than that.

SO the omnibus leapt and rattled along the side of the Green Park, and presently the conductor came upstairs, and Mr. Aitchison purchased a ticket to Epping Forest and the Bald-Faced Roebuck; and then the conductor advanced along the gangway and made a noise in the back of his throat which he fully believed to represent the words "Fares, please."

And the other passenger turned her head, revealing a countenance which was not so much innocent as deliciously foolish, and she said: "Oh! But hasn't the gentleman inside paid for me?"

"Wot gentleman inside?" said the conductor.

"The gentleman," said the young woman, "who was going to Epping Forest."

"The only gentleman," said the conductor, "wot's going to Epping Forest is the gentleman *hout*side."

And he looked at B. W. Aitchison, and the young woman with the deliciously foolish face also looked at B. W. Aitchison, and B. W. Aitchison suddenly hid his large pipe, and wished that his hat weren't quite so shabby. And the young woman said "Oh!" again, and bit her lip; and then she said: "Very well, then. One to Epping Forest, please." She said it rather obstinately; almost as though she feared that the conductor, or someone else, would argue with her.

But all the conductor did was to punch another ticket and hold it out.

"'Levenpence," he said.

The young woman looked at her lap, and she looked at the seat on each side of her, and she half rose, and she patted herself, and she grew rather pink in the face; and then she said: "Oh, bother! I never brought my purse."

The conductor stared at the ticket in his hand as though it had suddenly been transformed from a slip of paper to some monstrous changeling, with whose upkeep and education he was now saddled for life.

"'Aven't brought your purse?" he wailed. "But I've been and punched your ticket."

"I'm awfully sorry," said the young woman, growing pinker than ever.

"Sorry!" echoed the conductor, summing up in this one agonized word all the wrongs of all the conductors in the world. "But can't you see I've been and punched it?"

"Perhaps I'd better get off," said the young woman. "If you'll stop the bus."

"I dessay," the conductor almost wept—waving the elevenpenny ticket to and fro, as though he could hardly bear to touch it and yet was completely unable to let go. "But this ticket, miss. I've been and——"

And here the serious young author on the back seat leant forward, gulped, and raised his shabby hat.

"Let me pay for it," he interrupted.

"Wot?" said the conductor, much as if the sky had opened and deposited an angel on his upper deck. "Wot's that?"

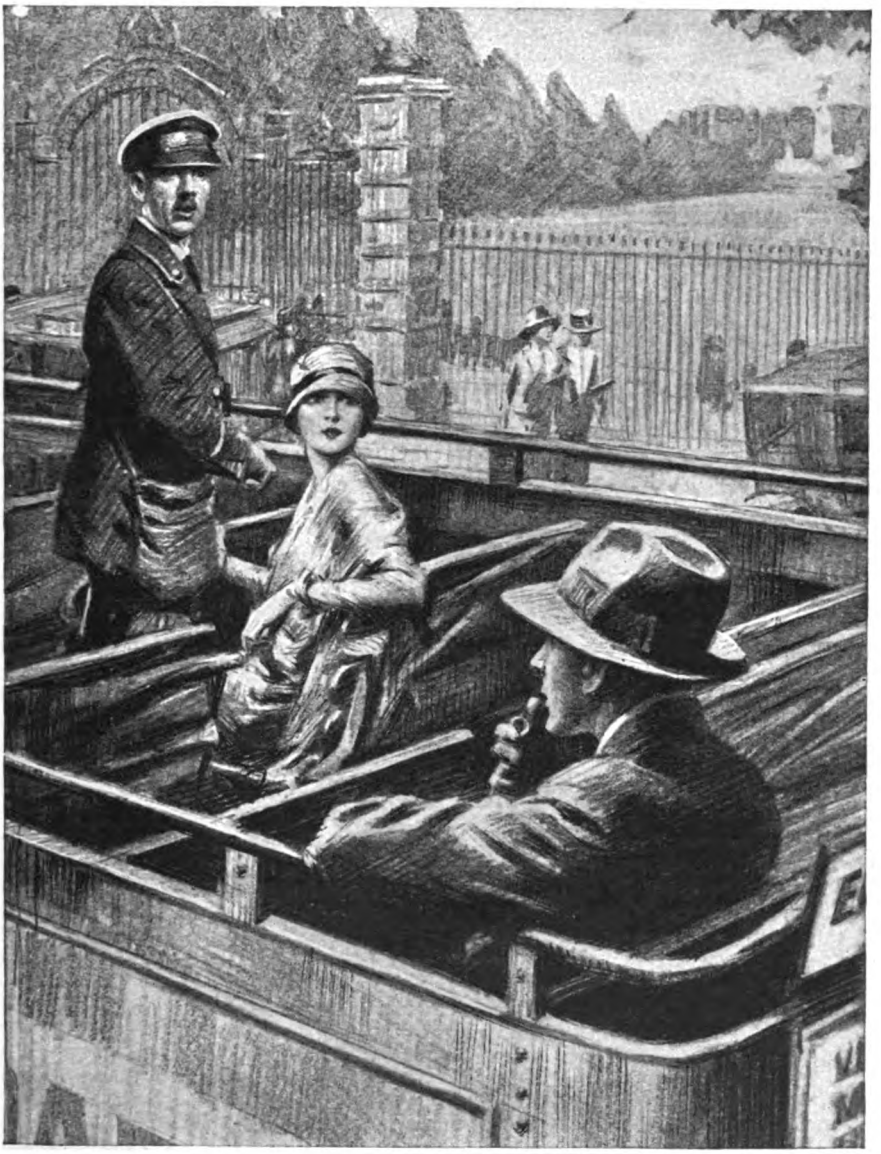
"I said, 'Let me pay for it,'" repeated B. W. Aitchison, rising to his feet and staggering a bit nearer.

"Oh, but I couldn't possibly——" began the young woman, also attempting to rise, clutching at the conductor's arm, and sitting suddenly down again.

But the conductor had already almost forced the ticket on the chivalrous Mr. Aitchison. He furthermore snatched at the chivalrous Mr. Aitchison's shilling, handed him a penny, and without waiting to remove the shilling from between his teeth—where he had instantly placed it—bolted off down the stairs again, and so vanished from sight. He was, as far as one can make out, a man who had few interests outside his profession, and there will be little sorrow when it is learnt that he never reappears in this story.

As for the young woman with that deliciously foolish pink face, she kept on looking at her saviour, and opening and shutting her mouth in preparation for the moment when he should look at her and she could thank him. And as for B. W. Aitchison, he sat down about three seats further forward—because he was too self-conscious to go back again—and being also too self-conscious to continue smoking his large pipe, he extended his left arm over the parapet and knocked out a quantity of ash and a still greater quantity of Baffy's Mixture against an enamelled iron advertisement of a proprietary whisky.

This producing a loud clanking sound,



"The only gentleman," said the conductor, "wot's going to Epping Forest is the gentleman *hout*side."

which made him more painfully aware of his existence than ever, he shot a swift, apologetic glance across the gangway, and at once his fellow-passenger addressed him.

"That was most awfully kind of you," she said. "Of course——"

"Oh, not at all," interrupted Mr. Aitchison, raising his shabby hat again and stuffing his large pipe into his pocket. "Oh, not in the least. Nothing. Very glad, I mean. Delighted."

"But it was," insisted the young woman. "And of course I'll pay you back, if——"

"Oh, no," said Mr. Aitchison, quickly. "Couldn't think of it. Absolutely not. Nothing at all."

"But I'll send you a postal order."

"No, no. Couldn't dream of it."

"But I can't possibly——"

"Yes, yes; you must. I—— That conductor, I mean——"

"Oh, wasn't he ridiculous?" The young

woman burst into a gay little laugh, and stopped suddenly. "It's all so silly," she went on, "because I don't really want to go to Epping Forest at all."

"Don't you?" said B. W. Aitchison, looking puzzled.

"Well, I did," admitted the young woman, confidentially. "I was going for the day—because it's such a perfect day, you know—with Jacko."

"With Jacko?" echoed B. W. Aitchison, peering nervously round for signs of a monkey.

"Of course," said the young woman. "I'm awfully fond of him, and he was taking the day off on purpose. But first of all he wanted to go to Burnham Beeches, and then he would try and make me go inside—because he said it was cooler—and then—well, I suppose he must have lost his temper and gone home again. He's like that, you know. I'd do anything for him; but when he will try to arrange things, one just *has* to disobey. Don't you agree?"

B. W. AITCHISON felt acutely embarrassed. At the beginning of this frank confession he had taken its hero for an ape; then for the young woman's betrothed; and now he wasn't at all sure that she wasn't married to him.

"Oh—— Well——" he temporized, blushing hotly.

"But I don't mind," interrupted the young woman, cheerfully. "He'll be miserable when he sees I've really gone on without him, and that'll teach him not to be so sulky. Won't it?"

"Er——" said B. W. Aitchison.

"And I shall have seen Epping Forest, and he won't," she added. "I don't know why it is, but I've always wanted to see Epping Forest, and I wouldn't mind if I never saw Burnham Beeches as long as I lived. Do you think that sort of thing matters?"

"Matters?" repeated B. W. Aitchison. "I don't quite——"

"I mean, do you think that married people ought to be just the same as each other, or quite different?"

"I—I've no idea," said B. W. Aitchison.

"Oh, don't be so dull," said the young woman with the deliciously foolish face. "You must have thought about it."

"I haven't, really," said B. W. Aitchison. And then, as though this were any excuse: "You see, I'm not married."

"Nor am I," said the young woman, promptly. "But Jacko was going to have proposed to me to-day. I know he was. That's what made him so cross."

She smiled at her travelling-companion; not apologetically, or with any air of regret for her remarkable candour; but as if, after all, the problem of her destiny were a very trifling affair, now that its settlement had been postponed. She also began to sing, providing a kind of wordless accompaniment to the unsteady motion of the omnibus; and B. W. Aitchison, after waiting for a while with courteous attention for anything else that she might see fit to add, turned his head away and gave himself up to a prolonged and philosophical inspection of the shop-windows and the people on the pavements.

Once or twice his hand strayed automatically to the large pipe in his side-pocket. Once he actually began filling it again from the paper packet of Baffy's Mixture. And then:—

"I say!"

B. W. Aitchison thrust pipe and packet back where they had come from, and swung round on the seat.

"I beg your pardon?" he said.

"Where do you suppose we are now?" asked the young woman with the deliciously foolish face. "Do you think we're nearly there?"

"I—I'm afraid I've no idea," said B. W. Aitchison.

"But why not? Don't you live in London?"

"Oh, yes," said B. W. Aitchison. "But I've never been to Epping Forest before. You see——"

"Yes?"

"Well, I mean to say, I work most of the time."

"How sickening!" said the young woman. "In an office?"

"No. Not exactly, I mean. I—I try and write things."

"You don't! Do you mean you're an author?"

"Well, I'd like to be."

"I don't understand," said the young woman. "Who's stopping you?"

B. W. Aitchison tried to laugh.

"Editors," he said. "Mostly."

"But why? I always thought editors—Oh, I see what you mean. They don't like your stories; is that it?"

"That's it," said B. W. Aitchison.

HE felt a little ashamed of himself as he waited for the sympathetic reply which might naturally be expected. But it never came.

"Then why," asked the young woman, "do you go riding about on the tops of omnibuses? That isn't the way to get on, you know."

B. W. Aitchison gasped. The first day for six months that he had snatched from that tyrannous typewriter, the first scent

of anything approaching fresh air which he had tasted since last November; and then to be scolded like this by a young woman who had quite obviously never done a day's work in her life!

"I'm sorry," he said, stiffly. "But——"

And then he stopped. Partly because he had just realized that it was no longer true, as he had been about to explain, that he had a splitting headache. And partly because this exasperating young woman had started singing again. He frowned at her lost profile, squared his shoulders, jerked his neck about inside his rather ill-fitting collar, and looked firmly down at the pavement.

The injustice of it! To accuse him—B. W. Aitchison—of riding about on the tops of omnibuses; to suggest that his failure was due to idleness and lack of concentration; to pretend that—to—to——

He nearly choked with rage. If the district through which the omnibus was now passing had not been so disgustingly sordid and hideously remote from civilization, he would have alighted (as they say) there and then. It was the least protest that—but for these impossible cobbles and tram-lines—he could have made against that brutal and unwarrantable aspersion.

After he'd paid for her ticket, too!

IN deep displeasure he once more drew the large pipe and the packet of Baffy's Mixture from their hiding-places, and resumed the process of stuffing the contents of the latter into the bowl of the former. He knew quite well, even as he did it, that a pipe packed with such splenetic fervour could never hope to draw. But his movements were quite beyond his control.

"There!" he muttered, ramming his thumb against the tobacco until the muscles of his forearm trembled. "There!"

He put the stem between his teeth. He sucked fiercely and unavailingly. And:—

"I say!"

He wouldn't answer her. He wouldn't turn his head if he died for it.

"I say!"

A bit louder this time. B. W. Aitchison did turn his head.

"Look here," said the young woman with the deliciously foolish face. "Did I annoy you just then?"

B. W. Aitchison snatched the large pipe from his mouth.

"Not in the least," he said, coldly.

"Oh, but of course I did," said the young woman. "You've no idea how cross you've been looking. Almost like——"

"I assure you——" interrupted B. W. Aitchison, and was instantly interrupted himself.

"Oh, please don't assure me," said the young woman. "I expect you're an awfully good author, really. And you come up here to get ideas, don't you? Is that it?"

AT this second mention of the most fatal word in a writer's vocabulary, B. W. Aitchison forgot all about keeping up appearances. He forgot everything but the agony of his own soul.

"Ideas!" he groaned aloud. "Don't talk to me about ideas! I sit and I sit, and I think and I think, and I haven't had anything that a half-witted savage could call an idea since I left the confounded bank and started this infernal life in my diabolical lodgings. Ideas! That's all you know about it. I'm one of Nature's washouts, I tell you. I'm a failure, a reviewer of other people's tosh, a 'literary aspirant'—Heaven help me!"

The young woman blinked with horror at the string of half-understood self-accusations. But if she had withheld her sympathy when he had seemed to ask for it, she produced it readily enough now that he was hardly listening.

"Oh, you mustn't say that!" she exclaimed.

"I do say it," shouted B. W. Aitchison. "It's true!"

"But what are ideas after all?" asked the young woman with the deliciously foolish face. "No one can *help* having ideas."

"I can," said B. W. Aitchison. "But where on earth are they to come from when I've never had any experience?"

"Experience?" repeated the young woman, questioningly. "What's that?"

"I've never met anyone," moaned B. W. Aitchison. "I've never been anywhere."

"Nonsense," said the young woman. "You've met me, and you're just going to Epping Forest. What else do you want?"

"What else? What——"

And then a most extraordinary thing happened on the top of that omnibus. Perhaps it was due to hunger, perhaps there was some microscopic readjustment of the particles in Mr. Aitchison's brain; but as he suddenly broke off like that, it seemed to him that his fellow-passenger was, for the hundredth part of a second, transfigured. Her face was no longer deliciously foolish, but most deliciously wise. And from it there seemed to radiate, in a manner which he could never describe afterwards even to himself, a blaze of plots, situations, scenarios, snatches of witty dialogue—all the material of his craft for which he had hitherto searched and sweated in vain. It was as if the brick wall against which he had battered all these months had suddenly dissolved into

thin air, revealing an author's paradise which he had but to enter to win for his own.

As he gave a faint gasp, it vanished. And yet he *knew* now. He knew now that he had been everywhere, met everyone, and had all the experience that mattered two straws. Never again, perhaps, would he see the whole vision set out for him like that, but it was enough to have caught this glimpse. His entire orientation towards his baffling and mysterious job had been completely changed. He knew where he was going now, and, by Jove, he'd dashed well get there!

The young woman was speaking again, but he scarcely heard her—so eager was he to get back to that typewriter and begin all over again.

"What?" he said, vaguely. "What's that?"

"——an idea for you," she was saying. "You might do a story about two men being in love with the same girl. Have you ever thought of that?"

"Splendid!" he cried. Not because he considered this worn-out theme in the least splendid, but because he was so grateful to her for the moment of revelation that somehow she had given him. And because, also, he didn't want to talk, but to think.

"Or about two people who quarrel and make it up again," added the young woman, smiling to herself.

"Top-hole!" said B. W. Aitchison, laughing aloud.

"Or—— Hullo! What's happening?"

THE omnibus staggered abruptly, and plunged off the road into the dusty yard before a little public-house. Recovered its equipoise with obvious reluctance. Turned again, almost at right angles. And stopped.

"We're there!" cried the young woman.

"Where?" said B. W. Aitchison, peering over the edge into the depths of a horse-trough.

"At Epping Forest," said the young woman. "Look!"

And sure enough, though the foreground was all bricks and mortar, swinging sign-board and advertisements of petrol, in the background the Forest rolled away, up-hill and down-dale, as far as the eye could reach.

"By Jove!" said B. W. Aitchison, standing up on tiptoe. And then it suddenly came into his mind that this young woman, who must now for ever be part and parcel of his literary career, had no purse; that she was very likely pining for refreshment; and that he had exactly one and threepence-halfpenny left in his pocket.

Well, he must offer it to her, then. That was all. It involved either pawning his watch or tramping the whole way back on his own feet, but he never hesitated.

"Look here," he said. "You'll want some more money, you know."

"Money?" said the young woman, with a start. "Oh, dear! I never thought of that. But I can't possibly——"

"You must," said B. W. Aitchison. "You must let me lend it you. You must really."

"Oh, but I couldn't——"

"Please!"

"No, no. I'll take a cab."

"There isn't one," said B. W. Aitchison. "You'll have to walk miles. And, besides—besides——"

"Besides what?"

"Oh, don't you understand?" cried B. W. Aitchison. "You've given me far more than a rotten bus-fare. You've changed everything for me. Something happened up here that—— Oh, I can't explain it. But you—I——"

He suddenly remembered that he was a serious young man, and stopped in confusion. "If I go on like this," he thought, "she'll think I've fallen in love with her. And I can't possibly have fallen in love with a strange girl on the top of an omnibus. I couldn't ever do a thing like that."

And as he stood there, holding out his one and threepence-halfpenny, and denying what he half-feared and half-wanted to be true; and as the young woman with the deliciously foolish face stared back at him with a faint, bewildered smile, there came a sound of footsteps on the stairs of the omnibus. B. W. Aitchison heard them, but imagining that they were caused by the conductor coming up to change the destination board again, he never turned his head.

But the young woman turned hers. And then:—

"Jacko!" she exclaimed. "How on earth did you get here?"

"I took a cab," said the worried-looking stranger. "I've been here nearly half an hour. I—I lost my temper again, darling, and then—— Oh, Lord, I thought you were never coming."

"Did you?" said the young woman, dreamily. "You poor old thing. And—— Why, you've got my purse!"

"I know," said the worried-looking stranger. "That's why——"

She snatched it from him. She wrenched it open, and began hunting quickly among the keys and powder-puffs and old letters. But as she found the shilling for which she was looking, as she raised her head to return thanks and to repay her debt, she was just in time to see the last of B. W. Aitchison, as he dashed madly down the little staircase and began running into the Forest.

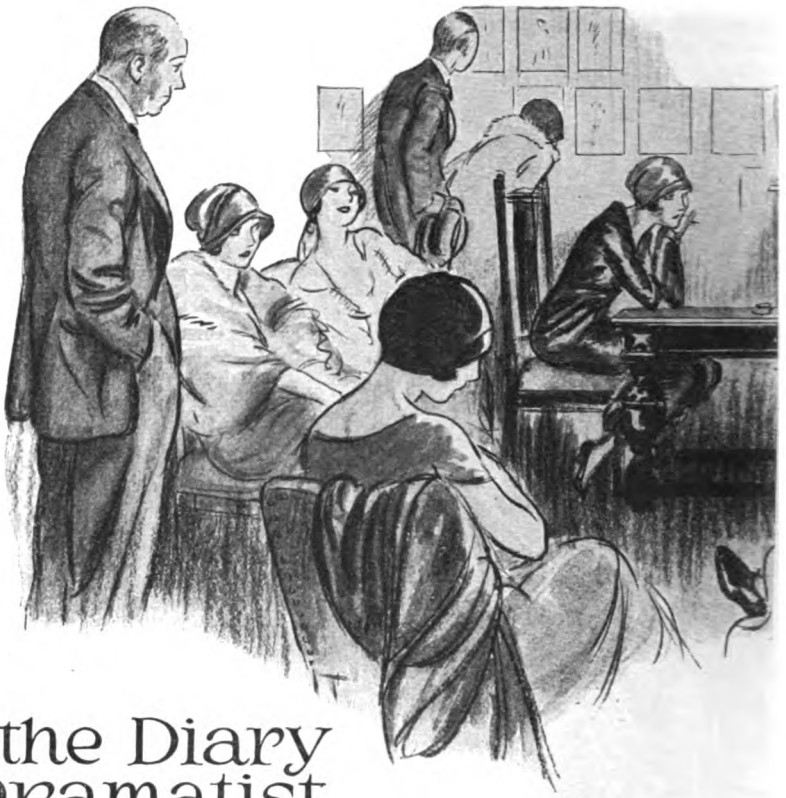
"'Two men in love with the same girl,'"

he panted, as he ran. "'Two people who quarrel and make it up again.' Oh, you darling! Oh, you absolute and perfect pet! I don't know which of those five Muses you were, but I've met you at last and you're just what I've always known you'd be. You give to those who don't ask and to those who don't deserve and even to those who don't believe; but, by Gosh, I'm going ahead this time and nothing in the whole world can stop me!"

A cloud of Baffy's Mixture rose from the hawthorn bush where a young man in a dusty suit, an ill-fitting collar, and a shabby hat sat crouching over a pocket-diary. With a stumpy pencil drawn from a loop in the binding he wrote and wrote, covering the days, weeks, and months like one possessed, while the sun slowly sank and the hours went by unnoticed.

And that is the true history of how B. W. Aitchison—who is now envied by all, admired by many, and respected by quite a few—found the inspiration which has not yet left him. But could it have been so if the upper deck of that omnibus, now long since relegated to the scrap-heap, had been covered with a roof?

She was just in time to see the last of B. W. Aitchison, as he dashed madly down the little staircase.



From the Diary of a Dramatist

The Life-Story of a Play

IT will, I believe, be interesting, exciting, amusing, and not a little pathetic to tell the life-story of a play as though it were that of a person, to take a specific piece of dramatic work from the inception of its idea and follow it through its various adventures to its bitter or glorious end.

Unlike a novel, whose course is as smooth as that of a river, going from the writer's desk to the editorial office of a magazine for serialization, from there into the publisher's hands, and finally out into the sea through the usual bookselling channels, a play goes through all the ups and downs of a prodigal son before it settles finally into the allotted theatre, either to enjoy the fatted calf or to be hustled into the storehouse followed by the sarcasm of the critics.

I have not the remotest notion whence comes the germ of an original play. It is, I suppose, a flying spark from some anvil, the outcome of something suggested by an actual happening, the twist of one of the not very numerous plots which have been used over and over again since the theatre, in some form or another, became part of civic life. I only know that so far as I am concerned the genesis of all my plays has come to me in the bath. It is there, while going through my matutinal exercises, without which no man can hope to

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The leading lady and leading man and the rest listen not so much to the reading of the play as to the lines that concern themselves.

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by
WILTON WILLIAMS

survive the enforced sedentariness of the city, that I am bitten with the ideas which divide themselves immediately into the two processes of my work—plays and novels. It must be confessed that the greater number of these bites fade away when they come to be examined in the cruel light of post-bath consideration. Every now and then, however, one of them impresses itself lastingly on the skin. From that moment whatever I may have of a dramatist in me is focused on this germ, thesis, plot, or whatever it may be called. I take it with me into the street. It goes with me for varying lengths of time through crowds and traffic, often to the intense annoyance of the drivers of taxi-cabs. It follows me in and out of my den, annoys me when I am endeavouring to concentrate on the work I am doing at the moment, and goes with me to bed. In fact, it becomes an obsession, a more and more fixed idea.

I think that it was Charles Frohman who said that if a plot cannot be told in fifty words the waste-paper basket is the only place for it, and it was he, in another moment of inspiration, who laid it down, and rightly, that if the scheme of a play is not erected on a solid foundation of truth, recognizable as such by its audience and its critics, it will never hold up its head.

But the idea is not everything, although

it is most of it. There are the people to be decided upon who shall carry it out. There are the place, the period, and the social set, length of the play and its treatment, whether comedy or farce—tragedy is barred—and before one dares to put the play on paper it is vitally necessary to work these details out in a full scenario. In other words, to construct it, to give it a design, to blueprint it in an architectural manner, and to see that it moves from act to act on an upward plane. Then, too, before anything may be committed to paper, the characterization of the chosen few who are to bring it into life must be carefully and painfully considered. Mostly, of course, these people are drawn from life—some with a suggestion of caricature, others with the accuracy of an untouched photograph, and the less essential ones with the soft chalk that is used by artists in roughing in their portraits. Wisely or not, most dramatists, I think, draw composite pictures of the members of their families and do not hesitate to go to the club, the golf course, the transatlantic liners, and other people's dinner-tables for the rest. In every play that is worth its salt the characters are recognizable human beings, however greatly they have been altered from their prototypes for the sake of art and safety.

WHEN the actual work on the play is started it must be done under the firm belief that it is going to be the best ever perpetrated by its author. Ink must contain optimism, pen a certain, definite triumph, and the daily struggle to concentrate, build up, and fill in the bricks must be conducted with the keenest sense of enjoyment. Otherwise the thing is bloodless, unvibrating, and as dry as a bone. To my way of thinking there is no medium of writing so delightful, so exhilarating, so surprising, or so difficult as that of dramatic work. The process of elimination which is essential to its technique lays a less heavy mental strain upon its author than in the work of writing a novel, and this is perhaps more easily explained by saying that whereas the average novel may contain from eighty to one hundred thousand words, no play, except those written by George Bernard Shaw, may have more words in it than fifteen thousand.

Well, then, say that the play has been written, typed, corrected, measured up, read to one's severest critic, who is invariably a wife. Not always one's own, perhaps. Then what? Then begins its chequered history, its series of adventures, humiliations, handings back and forth, inanities, futilities, misunderstandings. Sometimes it is lost, and if the author has not been wise enough to retain a duplicate copy it falls into the limbo of forgotten things or is written all over again. Sometimes, through the instrumentality of an agent or because it has captured the fancy of a star, it is given an immediate production. There have even been cases in which a play has been accepted on its merits by a manager. But they are few and far between. Most managers cannot read.

The vast majority of the plays that are written, generally by dramatists, who form something like seventy-five per cent. of the population of the world, drift about like snowflakes to melt and disappear. Ninety-nine per cent. of them deserve no better fate. Of those that remain in a concrete form the greater number are piled upon the shelves of agents' offices and grow sad and dusty in the corners of managers' rooms.

To follow the one that is alive, and has been accepted, through the second course of its adventures, come with me into the inner sanctum of the average manager. Sometimes it is a room made interesting by a gallery of theatrical photographs, strange toys given for luck, and one or two comfortable chairs. Sometimes it is merely an office. Always it is in a building whose windows let in the ceaseless roar of the street.

You must understand that a contract has been signed for its production for one of several reasons; though usually it is because its author has achieved a recent success and may do the trick again. Or it may be that the star has seen himself or herself in the leading *rôle*—a fat one—or because the enthusiasm of an agent has over-persuaded the manager and found a hole in his armour of unbelief and uncertainty. Never mind the reasons. It has landed, found a home.

You see him seated behind an enormous desk covered with a litter of letters, telegrams, and manuscripts. He has sent for me, and so he says, "Oh, good morning, Hamilton. What is it that you want?"

I explain that I don't want anything—except the finest cast that has ever been gathered together, the most popular theatre in the city, and the best publicity man. His smile is wan. As a rule he never smiles. He is too busy letting his theatres, meeting his backers, and trying to dodge the law. He says, "Oh, I remember. I sent for you. Before we cast your play there are points to be discussed."

With great surprise I ask him if he has read it, and he says "No, I never read plays. I have no time for that. But I have some notes from the people who did read it, and some of them seem to be good. Here's the first: 'Ask Mr. Hamilton to turn the male lead into a part for a girl. We have Miss

Blank Dash on our books. Why not let her work ? ' "

You, who are listening to this conversation, appear to be amazed. You can see, of course, without explanation, that such a change would wreck the play. Being accustomed to managers' talk, I am, however, unmoved, unshaken, and utterly without surprise. " What's the next ? " I ask.

As well as he can he gives out a list of other suggestions, all of which are equally impossible and absurd. They have an elaborate set, for instance, which was used in a recent failure. It is Chinese undoubtedly, but that seems no reason why it cannot be made to do for a first act that happens to be laid in Monte Carlo. Nobody will know the difference. It is a practical idea. Again I am unmoved. The third brain-wave is that the play should be taken out of 1926 and thrown back into the Stuart period by the utilization of all those nice costumes which were taken to the wardrobe when the musical version of a Nell Gwynn play failed to attract.

You wonder, probably, why I remain so calm beneath this shower of surprises ; why I don't explain the insanity of these ideas. My dear good fellow, I have been through all this before. The interview takes a certain amount of time because of incessant telephone calls, the interruptions by a secretary, an accountant, and the lawyer attached to the office. Finally, under the impression that I have agreed to carry out these alterations, the manager dismisses us. And then you hear me laugh.

IT has already got about that this play is down for production. Every room in the office is crowded with applicants for parts. Sixty or seventy people have been waiting since nine o'clock and others are coming up. On my way out to the comparative peace and quiet of a theatrical agent's office, I am buttonholed by many almost leading ladies and very near male stars, every one of whom has been promised something by the girl at the switchboard, a very kindly soul. It is difficult to escape. I know and like many of these people. They have worked for me before. But I have, of course, a very definite idea of the cast which is required, and it is rather painful to say that none of them are down on my list. So there are vague badinage, friendly greetings, and promises not to forget.

A man comes up who is no longer in the first flush of giddy youth. Far from it. In fact, Anno Domini has treated him rather roughly. " For old times' sake, old man," says he. " I've two boys at school and a wife in the doctor's hands. You ought to give me the leading part—but if there is a comedy butler——"

Up comes a most charming little lady. Her hair is a most unnatural red and time has left its marks upon her face. Not so long ago there was an " and " in front of her name, which was printed in large black letters on the programme. Much water had passed under the bridges since then, and the public's former favourite, whose golden curls and wide blue eyes had been the talk of the town, now dangles a future leading lady in the shape of a granddaughter upon her knees. " Dearie," she says, " couldn't you give me something—any little thing ? I haven't worked for four years, and the old man's out of luck. An aunt, the heroine's sister, the bubbling little mother ? Something, however small. The critics like me, and there are still a few who remember. I could fill several seats every night."

What on earth is to be said ? There are newer faces, more recent reputations. Every dog has his day. The public is a merciless one, very hard to please. The critics are none too kind.

In the passage, on our way out to the lift and the freedom of the streets, a girl comes up with outstretched hand. She is a very smart young person, whose wagon is hitched to a par—the almost daily society paragraph relating to *débutante* parties. " I am on the stage," she tells me. " I am an actress now. I haven't done anything yet, but I've shown myself in the agents' offices every day this week. Give me your leading part and I will make such a stir in society as never was known before."

We beat a strategic retreat. Then follow the comedy, pathos, tragedy, and heartbreak of the agent's office, where in a private room, papered with photographs, we go to gather the cast. The optimistic agent, a fat young man with the bedside manner to whom every goose is a swan, has already been given the list. He begins by saying, " Well, the ideal at which you are aiming is great, perfectly great. But every one of the people that you have pencilled in is unprocurable —working here and there or else away on the road. But, of course, there are excellent substitutes. I can show you a dozen who will fit every part like a glove."

Somebody opens the door. Through it you catch a glimpse of an outer office which resembles nothing so much as a *thé dansant* at a fashionable restaurant. The process of elimination which then proceeds is most trying for all concerned.

I have given the agent a detailed description of the various parts in the play so that he should show me only those actors and actresses who answer to the type. " All right," says he, " let's take your heroine first. What did you say about her ? Oh, yes, I remember. A tall, slight, autocratic,

"You'll have to look no farther. She's absolutely 'it.' Might have been born for the part."

very beautiful, very charming girl of about nineteen years of age. Must wear clothes well and look as though she had been to a fashionable school. Fine."

With an exuberant smile and an air of supreme confidence, he opens the door and calls. He turns and adds: "You'll have to look no farther. She's absolutely 'it.' Might have been born for the part."

I turn to the door and in dances a dear little soul who is so short as to be almost a freak, as plump and well-fed as a partridge, and who seems to be on the verge of bursting into song. In fact, the antithesis of my requirements, who cannot be made to fit. The awkwardness is frightful. What is to be said except, "How do you do? So glad to see you. So sorry, the part about which you have come has already been filled." There is a most disappointed "Oh," an angry look at the agent, and an expression which announces very plainly the knowledge that this statement is a lie. The applicant does not dance out.

"My dear fellow, I said tall and slight." To which the agent replies, "Well, you may not believe it, but she looks tall and slight on the stage."

Like our late dear Queen Victoria, you are not amused. On the contrary, having imagination and sympathy, you are rather pained at this. You guess that the little actress who has just gone out would give her ears for the part and that she has probably been spending every day of the last six weeks among the crowd in the outer office.

Never mind. The agent has others. Many others. Among whom I am bound to find the very girl that I need. So he calls another name. "Here you are," says he. "Very tall and slight." He is perfectly accurate. The girl who stands before us with an ingratiating smile is six foot one at least, and immediately there enters into one's mind the ludicrous picture of a leading man looking up at her from his five foot nine. More awkwardness. The repetition of the old formula. A rather abrupt "Good-bye." More disappointment. Further heartbreak. What a life!

From eleven o'clock in the morning until five o'clock at night, with an interval for lunch, the process is repeated all the way through the list. One after another these waiting and eager people are looked over and interviewed. Many of them are actors and actresses of established reputation—popular favourites even. But they are tall when they should be short, short when they should be tall, thin when they should be fat, fat when they should be thin. In a word, they conform in no respect whatever to the type that is required. Not a single one of them is able to understand the reason of refusal. Explanations and apologies butter no parsnips. Being actors it seems to them that they are for that reason suitable for any sort of part. The question of type seems foolish. Some of them know their history and refer to the fact that in the good old days, when Shakespeare reigned supreme, boys played the parts of his heroines, very old men played Hamlet, and later in the history of the drama, on the English-speaking stage, no actress was permitted to play Juliet until she was fifty-six.

Finally, after many a struggle, many wounded feelings, and much bad blood, a sort of cast is gathered together, not a single member of which, in many cases, conforms to the ideal. Instead of being tall and muscular and twenty-seven, the leading man is short and soft and forty-eight ; and instead of being tall and slight, autocratic and obviously London, the leading lady is a dumpy little person with a shock of yellow hair who turns her toes in like a duck and chews gum in the wings. Nevertheless both of them are famous. They are to be co-starred with their names in electric lights. The rest of the company is made up of undoubted talent but the wrong personality.

Come now into my den at half-past two for the reading of the play. Not one of the company has read it, and so curiosity runs high. That is the only reason why the arrivals are punctual. Artistes are oblivious to time. There are warm and cheery greetings, jokes about former shows. You will not fail to notice the complete and painful silence that falls when I commence. The leading lady and leading man and the rest of the people there listen not so much to the play as to the lines that concern themselves. You will see eagerness, interest, amusement, delight, or, on the contrary, a very reverse of these feelings on the faces of each one of them when *they* are, so to speak, "on." When they are "off" their attention wanders to the details of my room—my pipes, my caricatures, my photographs of men in uniform, my models of ships, my books. If the leading lady is satisfied, is never off the stage, has all the best lines and the curtains and every ounce of sympathy, the play, of course, is great, and this is the description which is applied to it for the same reasons by the leading man. The rest are always inevitably disappointed and depressed. However, they must live, and once more support the stars.

It is a difficult afternoon, a study in temperaments. Usually it is the stage-manager or the director from whom one gets the truth. The director has made some notes. He says, "Um, not so awfully bad. May be able to make something of it. Not as good as your last. Lots of work to be done. Shouldn't be surprised if the last act has to be entirely re-written. You see, it wants a wow. However, we'll start to-morrow and rough it out." The stage-manager is less abrupt than that in most instances. He has to be. From him usually comes, "I like it. I think it stands a chance. It's funny here and there and the curtain of the second act is pretty good, I think."

"To-morrow. Ten o'clock."

NOW you are in the theatre where rehearsals are to commence. And as it is one in which a piece is playing there are programmes all over the floor. The seats are shrouded. The house is cold. Women are poking about. There is the incessant humming of vacuum cleaners and the sound of telephones. The curtain is up and the

The girl is six foot one at least, and there enters into one's mind the ludicrous picture of a leading man looking up at her from his five foot nine.

stage is empty. The scenery of the existing play is hanging from the flies, and its furniture, duly protected by cloths, is stacked against the walls. With the assistance of the script, the stage-manager has already mapped out the furniture of the first act. That is to say, he has collected as many broken chairs as he can find and placed them about the stage. Two of these must do for a sofa. Another two, placed sideways, for the door leading into the garden or the drawing-room. One on the O.P. side must be the fireplace in imagination. The best of them have been placed under a large electric light, to be occupied by the director, the author, and the stars. The also-rans of the cast are punctual to the minute, and you can infallibly tell the various gradations of importance of the other people concerned by the time of their arrival. The leading lady is late. Why be a leading lady if you can't keep people waiting ?

And then the trouble begins.

The leading lady approaches the author and the director every morning with her copy marked all over with suggestions.

THERE are several ways of rehearsing a play. One is to pay no attention to the intonations and characterizations of the actors until they drop their books, and during the whole of that time, which lasts about a week, to worry simply about movements. Another method is to start at once on the actors in order that they shall know precisely who and what they are supposed to be, and pay no attention to movements until the character has been formed. I am all in favour of the latter method. It makes it easier to find out what changes are to be made in the cast and to make up one's mind as soon as possible whether in the working out of the various characters one's psychology has been correct. It is, I think, a waste of time to pay more attention at any time to the mechanics of a play than to its human side, and it is very difficult to break an actor or an actress, even after a fortnight's rehearsal, of a wrong reading. He or she has learnt the part "that way," and that way seems the best.

At the end of the first week, by which time the first act will have been fairly well roughed out, the leading lady has had many things to say. She has approached the author and the director every morning with her copy marked all over with suggestions. "Don't you think it will be better," she says, "if I don't come on until later in the act and then never leave it until the end ? Don't you think—— ? Don't you think——? Don't you think——? " None of these thoughts, brain waves, and inspirations have anything to do with the betterment of the play. They deal invariably with the improvements, or at any rate enlargement, of the part for which she has been cast. In most cases it is better at once to bid a fond farewell to the little star and escort her through the shrouded theatre to the street, and either to withdraw the play from rehearsal or procure the services of a less prominent person and carry on. Otherwise it is more than probable that not only will the main thesis of the play be lost, but that it will be flung out of balance and rendered ridiculous.

As a rule it is easy for the author to

discover before the rehearsals draw to an end where the weaknesses, if any, of his play exist. It is a peculiar thing that a play which reads well often acts badly, and *vice versa*. I have noticed many times with my own work and with the work of other men that there are certain scenes which seem to be extraordinarily amusing on paper, but which have only to be put to the test of rehearsal to drop head-first into the pit in which in less expensive days the orchestra tuned up. It is, too, quite impossible to ascertain until a play has been well rehearsed what lines are to be cut, what entrances altered, and what exits are to be brought about with greater or less rapidity.

It has been proved again and again how hopeless it is to make a true estimate of a play's appeal to an audience until it faces one. There are few authors and even fewer directors who dare to prophesy exactly how a play will " take." Scenes which have been rehearsed for laughs and which have appealed to all concerned as being extremely funny during rehearsal may be received with stony silence by the people in front on " the night." Other scenes which appear to be trivial and unimportant may go with roars of laughter, while tragic moments and those in which the whole drama of the play has been worked up to a high pitch may fizzle like damp gunpowder when put to the final test.

NOTHING is more fatal to any play than to be criticized by those attached to the management during the course of rehearsals. It is far better to gather the opinions of the cleaning women or the man in the box-office or someone out of the street. Actors and actresses, generally speaking, are never able to tell before they have faced an audience how their scenes will go, or where their laughs will come, and there is an old saying in the theatre that if the company likes the play and is betting on its success it will get no farther than an abortive try-out and die at the end of a week.

In the old days before the war, and they seem to be very old, it was less difficult to form an opinion as to a play's value during its rehearsals than it is to-day. The audiences of twelve and fifteen years ago—the pre-jazz age—could be relied upon to enjoy and support plays in which there was literary value, lightness of touch and charm, neat and deft characterization, and truth to life. The public taste was higher in those days, and it would be quite easy to name a list of comedies, written by men who took the theatre seriously and were rewarded for their pains, which, if produced to-day, would make less ripple on the surface of a theatrical week than a pebble dropped in the sea.

It may be that the vast popularity of the moving picture, with its power to depict action in a manner quite impossible to the stage, has had a good deal to do with this. It may be that the habit established by moving pictures of doing away with the use of the brain has made the theatre ask too much of its former patrons when it requires them to think. They have become unaccustomed to the spoken word. They do not use their ears. Dialogue bores, and where there is no astounding action everything seems dull.

The leading lady is annoyed because one of the other ladies has chosen a frock the colour of which kills the very expensive dress in which she is to make her first appearance.

It is true to say, after having made a

rough summary of the plays that have caught on now, that the public can be drawn into the theatre only by the temptation of music accompanied by slap-stick, of fast-moving revues in which there is nakedness, and of plays which are peppered with dirt. The consequence is that the Barries, Pineros, and Sutros are silent. They cannot compete. Both London and New York have recently seen, without any emotion, a series of funerals from their theatres of plays which would have been received with enthusiasm and delight in the days before the war. It is not the theatre which needs to be censored but the present-day audience.

At the end of each act the director

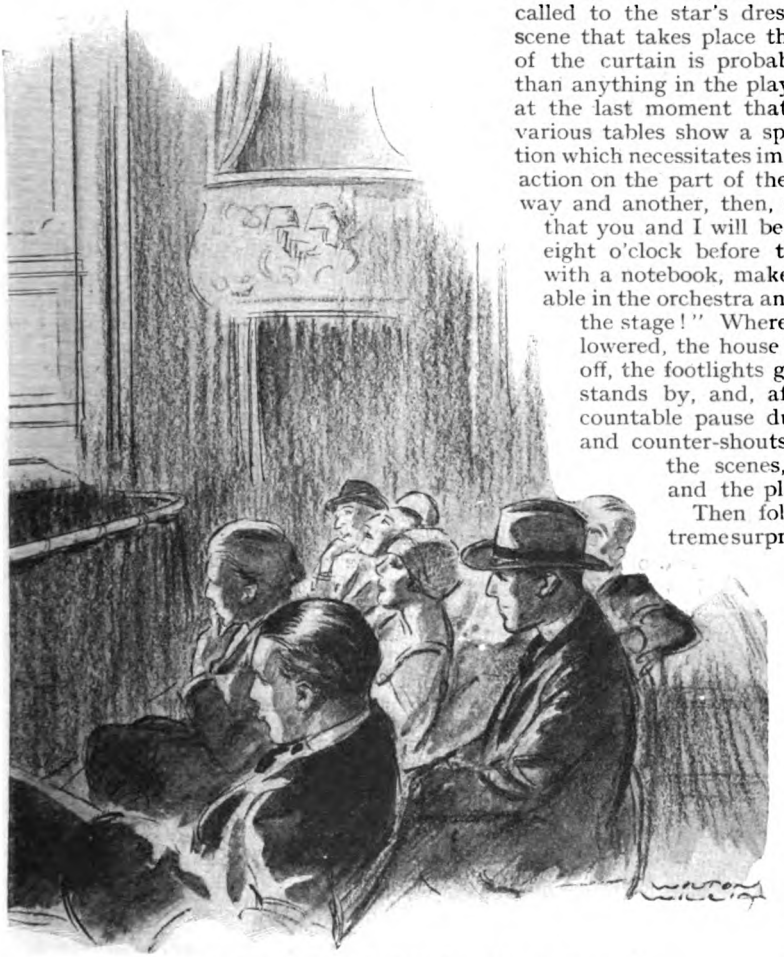
Come with me now to one of the old, frowsty, out-of-date theatres which still manage to hold up their heads in a town where plays are tried out. We arrive at this place on Sunday morning after travelling all night and find the stage bare and awaiting our arrival. The scenery, unless old sets have been provided for the sake of economy, a practice made necessary to-day by the huge increase in all theatrical expenses, has only just been constructed and painted and is now about to be slung together for the first time. There are certain members of a crew who are attached to the company, and these men are joined by others at the theatre. They are great, big, capable, good-natured leisurely creatures who know their jobs but refuse to be hurried, or to do one minute's more work than is necessary under the Union rules. They are joined at once by the stage-manager, whose immediate duty it is to allot the dressing-rooms to the members of the company and to see to it that the star has one which is unquestionably the best. He has by this time become somewhat interested in the play. He would also like to see how the scenery looks when it is set up. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that he shall pursue the manners and the methods of an ambassador in order to keep the little tousled-headed star in as good a temper as possible, and he knows from former never-to-be-forgotten experiences that the matter of her dressing-room is a very vital one.

The director and the members of the company take possession of their rooms in the local hotel, and if they are wise stay there comfortably until they receive an S.O.S. They run over their lines in peace and quiet, sleep a little, and dine.

By this time, with luck and cajolery, the scenery will have been set, decorated, and slung, the lighting arrangements will have been worked out, and other detail will have

been prepared for the dress rehearsal which is to take place at seven o'clock.

It is an exciting moment. Everyone is strung up to a high pitch of nerves and there is so great a note of uncertainty about the proceedings that a sort of exhilaration runs through everyone. It may be said that the members of the company are still on speaking terms. There is to be no one in front except a scout or two from the manager's office, one or two mothers, and a husband or so, all of whom have burnt a candle to the play's success for purely personal reasons.



reads out his notes to the company before the next act proceeds.

I have said that the dress rehearsal is to commence at seven o'clock, but never in the history of theatricals has a dress rehearsal commenced at the appointed hour. Something always goes wrong. A vital prop is missing. A truck has failed to arrive. The leading lady is annoyed because one of the other ladies has chosen a frock the colour of which kills the very expensive dress in which she is to make her first appearance. Author, director, and stage-manager are called to the star's dressing-room, and the scene that takes place there before the rise of the curtain is probably more dramatic than anything in the play. It is discovered at the last moment that the lamps on the various tables show a spirit of insubordination which necessitates immediate and drastic action on the part of the electricians. One way and another, then, it is pretty certain that you and I will be kept waiting until eight o'clock before the director, armed with a notebook, makes himself comfortable in the orchestra and shouts out "Clear the stage!" Whereupon the curtain is lowered, the house lights are switched off, the footlights go up, the company stands by, and, after one last unaccountable pause during which shouts and counter-shouts are raised behind the scenes, the curtain rises and the play begins.

Then follow a series of extreme surprises, astonishments, disappointments, and sometimes, by the grace of Thespis, exhilarations, triumphs, and mutual congratulations. For the first time one sees clearly not only what the play is all about, but gathers some inkling as to how it is going to look to a sceptical audience. There is no sensation in the world, I suppose, so amazing to an author as this one is. Here at last, after an infinite amount of trouble, argument, alteration, despair, and doubt, is the play in concrete form. Here is the thing, the work, the entity upon which he has devoted so much time and thought, moving, vibrating, alive. One after another his brain-children appear before him, sometimes exactly as he conceived them, more often only in nebulous outline. From the moment the curtain rises the boredom which has been brought about by the monotonous reiteration of rehearsals lifts like a fog in a breeze, and whether the play proves to be good, bad, or indifferent, it assumes a newness which keeps him on the edge of his seat. At the end of each act the wise and competent director reads out his notes to the

company before the next act proceeds. And at the end of the whole business he goes on the stage and delivers himself of a speech. In this he sums up his reactions to the play and the playing like a judge in an important case. He looks very pale and tired sitting on one of the sofas with the company grouped about him with their made-up faces. If he is a polite and grateful director he thanks them for their loyal and earnest efforts and for all that they have done. It is a wise author who stands aside during this proceeding and holds back his remarks until he can get the director in a quiet place. Never interfere with the man at the wheel is an admirable motto, and there is another one equally good : When you hire a dog, don't bark yourself.

If the play seems to have come through the dress rehearsal with flying colours, the consultation that follows in an hotel bedroom will be just as serious as the one which takes place if it has shown weaknesses, dullness, bad playing, and ill-fitting joints. Being good, it must be made better. If bad, a diagnosis must be made for an immediate operation, and all hands summoned to the pump.

Whatever may be the director's verdict after a dress rehearsal, it is very likely to be reversed when an audience sits in judgment at the opening performance. There are as many instances in which plays regarded up to the moment as hopeless by everyone concerned have been received with acclamation by a first-night public as of those looked upon as "sure fire hits" which have failed to stir the slightest enthusiasm in any part of the house. Play-producing is as great a gamble as horse-racing, and even the most cordial endorsement and support of the try-out audiences do not mean a similar treatment of the play in London.

Say, however, that it has braved successfully the elements of the road, encouraged the manager to a further outlay, and is placed among the entries for the Metropolitan Stakes. Come with me finally to the theatre in which it is to challenge the death-watch of a London first-night. There has been a polishing rehearsal on the stage that day—a day of dull dread and inarticulate excitement, of feverish activity among the stage-hands and in the manager's office. The box-office man has dodged from one of his several telephones to another in the manner of a race-track fiend, for the first and last time, maybe, and I, with a constant pain in the solar plexus, have hung about the theatre in everybody's way. Then, having sent flowers to the ladies of the cast and good-luck telegrams to everyone concerned, I take you to my club for dinner, and pretend to eat. And there, or at another theatre, with a tingling spine you and I wait to be told whether the audience has turned thumbs up or down. The director will tell the truth, without the slightest doubt.

In the morning there are the papers. . . .

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 159.

(The Third of the Series.)

If tired of Parliament, and ease
Appeals to you, apply for these.

1. O'er fair Cornubia's land I fly;
   No aeroplane, a bird am I.
2. Here is a sea-washed piece of land which
   Recalls at once the name of Sandwich.
3. The love that is too hot and strong
   Burns soon to waste, as says the song.
4. Praise is his name and due—and yet
   Half martyr and half martinet.
5. By flood and fortune treated ill,
   He lost his family and mill.
6. Behold the ancient boundary
   Of Normandy and Brittany.
7. Fair-skinned and of a ruddy hue?
   The epithet applies to you.
8. How many noses have you seen?
   Twice as many of these, I ween.

KING COLE.

Answers to Acrostic No. 159 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on October 12th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 158.

1. D	emetriu	S
2. I	mprompt	U
3. V	ibratio	N
4. E	meral	D
5. R	ide	R
6. S	h	Y

NOTES.—Light 1. A Midsummer Night's Dream. 2. Romp, within.

THIRTY-SECOND SERIES: RESULT.

ALL the four acrostics were answered correctly by Beggar, Cyno, Forest, Herbert, Junius, Pact, Pobre, Ranger, Serf, Sloes, Wahed, Wals, Yagnit, and Zyme, and these fourteen solvers will share the prizes, each one receiving eighteen shillings.

Beggar is Mr. B. G. Pearce, 5, Ethelbert Road, Bromley, Kent; Cyno is Mr. C. Norman, 28, Duke's Avenue, New Malden, Surrey; Forest is Mr. P. E. Herrick, 40, Arodene Road, S.W.2; Herbert is Mr. H. Beaumont, 148, Francis Road, Leyton, E.10; Junius is Mr. F. C. W. Grigson, Amesbury, Hindhead; Pact is Mr. P. A. C. Thorne, 41, Harbord Street, Fulham, S.W.6; Pobre is Mr. G. Darby, 13, Lansdowne Gardens, S. Lambeth, S.W.8; Ranger is Mr. W. G. Stirling, 7, Wilton Road, Bexhill-on-Sea; Serf is Mr. F. Deaton, 37, Groombridge Road, South Hackney, E.9; Sloes is Mr. C. Sloman, 17, Clematis Street, London, W.12; Wahed is Mr. W. N. Armstrong, 40, Langdon Park Road, N.6; Wals is Mr. W. Stradling, 3, Charlbury Road, Oxford; Yagnit is Mr. L. Tingay, 15, Cranbourne Road, Muswell Hill, N.10; Zyme is Mr. J. W. Pulsford, 107A, Brixton Hill, London, S.W.2.

FARRIMOND

by

ALBERT KINROSS

Illustrated by
S. BRIAULT

I.

SOMEHOW that name had for Cornish an irresistible attraction. He had found it first of all on the map—"Ordnance Survey Tourist Map: The Peak District." Farrimond! The word had a flavour. He had turned next to a "County History," wherein it became "Pharamond" and "Farramond" as well. It was the seat of an ancient and noble family, he learnt, first Norman, which accounted for the "Pharamond," then English, as it was to-day. The house was notable as a fine specimen of domestic Tudor architecture, perhaps the finest in the county, but, being so remote, it was little visited. Of the ancient Norman castle which had preceded it, only the ruins remained. The family had produced no man or woman of special mark. Not very informative, was it? About Chatsworth and Haddon Hall there were whole pages.

Hugh Cornish, very much the wanderer, had run up to Derbyshire on account of his sister. It was ten years since he had seen her, or his brother-in-law, and their girl and boy. His interests lay in oil, and England was become a romantic place that dwelt in his memory, and little more. Like most of the returned, fresh from half-savage or new countries, he was inclined to idealize the old and settled.

He drove up to Blackwell Spa in a two-seater he had just bought, which would see him through this visit home. When his time was up he would sell it. His baggage, three well-filled suit-cases, was in the dicky.

They were expecting him at the "Hydro," an immense building that sprawled across its hillside and dominated the dale or valley. His sister, a large, placid woman, was waiting in the hall; his brother-in-law, Tom Beaumont, gleamed and glistened with the "treatment," which was chiefly one long round of perspiration. His niece, a slim young thing, who earned her living as a secretary, and the nephew, who was in his last year at Oxford, joined them as they went in to tea. Ten years make a difference. Cornish had seen a deal, a very great deal, of the world since the last time, and was now a man nearing the middle thirties; the others had stayed in a London suburb the mere name of which is all but a guarantee of real worth. He looked at the calm, good-humoured face of May, his sister; at Beaumont, who had gone on being something solid in the City; at that superior couple, the girl and boy, who, failing other distinction, seemed to be what is known as "artistic." At the back of Cornish's mind hung the tropical and semi-tropical pictures which go with oil; of Persia and camels and acrid dust, the stifling wells on the Red Sea, Mexico, and the swamps of Louisiana.

"You're more sunburnt than we are," his sister was saying. "It's hot out there, isn't it?"

"Where?" asked Cornish.

"Where you've been."

"Where *have* you been?" asked his niece.

The brother-in-law regarded him through eyes which said, "I can't quite make this fellow out."

The nephew condescended to listen while he gave an outline.

"It must be wonderful," said the niece, stressing the last word. Cornish soon discovered that almost everything this young woman bent her mind to was either "wonderful" or "priceless." It saved thought, he concluded.

"Not half so wonderful as England," he answered; "green grass and green trees—I haven't seen them for ages."

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" But there's the desert," said his nephew. " What's that like ? "

" Sand."

" I'd like to travel," said his sister.

" Well, why don't you ? "

" Tom's got lumbago. That's why we've come here ; everybody's got something."

By the evening Cornish discovered that everybody *had* " got something," or was the wife or husband or some sort of connection of somebody with something that affected their legs or back, or stiffened them or bent them. It was a depressing place. At breakfast next day it reminded him of a workhouse, only the inmates were better dressed and better housed, and, doubtless, more prosperous. But Tom Beaumont was in raptures over the " treatment," and May was pleased because Tom was pleased. The two youngsters sat there disgruntled. " Why, in Heaven's name, had they been brought here ? " they asked. To Hugh Cornish they seemed singularly without decision and without initiative. " Pampered, rather," he thought them, as they went down languidly to the tennis courts, while Tom was busy with his baths and radiant heat and mustard packs. The girl seemed to earn her living and spend the money on clothes.

He took his sister out in the two-seater ; but she was used to this country, or so she said. A man at the Hydro had urged them to visit Haddon Hall ; it was described in " Dorothy Vernon's novels," he explained. May took this outing very calmly ; an unimaginative woman, who preferred a quiet chat with some other lady as they sat knitting in the sun on one of the Hydro's many terraces.

It was while loafing round the town next afternoon that Hugh Cornish bought the map ; for *he* wasn't " used to this country," and wanted more. And as the stiff canvas lay outspread upon the table of his room upstairs in the hour before dinner, he discovered the name Farrimond and lingered over it. And the next day it pursued him and followed him, till, walking again in the town after lunch, he looked up and beheld a public library. It was here that he found the County History, and learnt the rest, the little, it had to say about the place and family.

II.

HIS niece had asked him what he was doing with himself that day.

" I'm driving out to Farrimond," he answered.

" What's that ? "

" I don't know, but I like the name. Coming ? We'll lunch somewhere."

" You're priceless," she answered. " You go, and tell us what it's like. Perhaps we'll come."

Nobody else would venture, so he went off alone, glad to be free of the Hydro and its dilapidated inmates, of all those odd people, chained by the leg, who lacked his curiosity, his buoyant sense of adventure. They were so used to it all, as though England held no new discoveries, nothing that was not known and tabulated and fixed. " Farrimond ! " he said, and, unfolding his map, took the way there.

It led over moors, open and breezy, that almost made one sing ; so clean they were, so full of the freshness of the wind, of great skies, of hills beyond hills. Stone walls lined the road and bright green fields caught the shadow of cloud as the sea catches it. Or you went through narrow dales with their stream and stone houses, and past quarries and limekilns, and it was August. Hot down here, but cool when you ascended. The little two-seater ran on and on.

He had left the great dales, settled and populous, and full, at this season, of char-à-bancs and herds of tourists. He was in a country of byways, of unfrequented roads that climbed the moors or fell into bottoms of fat pasturage, with a farmhouse here, a village there, and fields of browsing cattle. By one o'clock he had come to the place he was seeking, a few cottages, an inn, a church and churchyard facing the gates of a park, more of a hamlet than a village, and the church stood by a lake that mirrored it, so that one saw two churches, the real one and its reflection. A solitary swan rode on the lake.

THE inn was old, and, painted across its face, he read its name, the Farrimond Arms. These were emblazoned in faded green and gold on a swinging sign that creaked. There was a helmet, an illegible motto, and, between them, a shield holding the heads of three animals that stuck out their tongues. It looked like that to Cornish, who knew nothing of heraldry. He ordered lunch here. Cold meat and lettuce and bread and cheese and beer were all they had to offer. It was enough. Afterwards he lit his pipe and sat out on a bench, watching the swan and the two reflections in the lake, and when that was done he strolled over to the church and entered.

It was full of Farrimonds, from Sir Robert de Pharamond, whose tomb stood in the chancel, with a cross-legged effigy wearing chain mail carved in stone, to the more splendid figures in the chapel that reposed in coloured statuary beside their spouses. And there were sixteenth-century brasses and a fourteenth-century couple done in

painted wood and covered with dust that soiled the grey and gold and scarlet of their costumes. Three helmets crowned with a Saracen's head were stuck on pegs that overhung the altar, and there were painted hatchments and coats of arms, woven in rotting silk, hung up promiscuously. The three boars' heads with their scarlet tongues were well defined here. But all this was dead and rather charnel-housey, thought Cornish, coming out again into the open.

HE entered the park by its wrought-iron gates flanked with worn heraldic images, going past a lodge, and next downhill, through an avenue of chestnuts, and, at a bend, he came full on a grey stone house that thrilled him. It was so unexpected and so lovely. This was Farrimond, and worthy of a name which, for some mysterious reason, Cornish had found beautiful, charged with a magnetism, a strange, romantic quality, that had first haunted him and had now drawn him to itself. He paused and watched the house, almost as though he half expected it to move or to do something. But nothing stirred here, not a living thing. He was alone with Farrimond. And then, from nowhere, a feeling swept over him, as though he had come into the presence of a profound and unutterable sorrow. " Desolate splendour "—the words rose to his lips. He had seen them in a book somewhere or in a poem. He was not artistic or literary or anything of that kind, but in his nomad life he had found that books were companions. And this place seemed splendid yet desolate, as though bereaved and forsaken.

He went down to the gate-house, the massive doors of which stood wide open, and through these into a courtyard banked with flowers. There were rooms with mullioned windows all around him, and grey stone steps that led to other doors, and stone mounting-blocks from which horsemen of a bygone day had leapt into vanished saddles. God, how old it was, and how far-away, and how silent, but for the pigeons that had descended at his feet! The desolation had lifted, now that he stood here in the sunlight. So this was Farrimond! It was all he had pictured, and more, far more. And he was not alone here. He felt that somebody was watching him and that he was discovered.

One of the doors had opened, and next, down the worn grey steps, came a young woman, bare-headed and with honey-coloured hair. She was neither short nor tall, and she was soft and delicately rounded, as women are in old portraits. She had clear grey eyes that rested on Cornish and a red mouth shaped like a Cupid's bow. Her dress was of a shade of brown that went well with her hair, and her buckskin shoes and silk stockings matched both, and Cornish looked down on her as she came towards him and felt that she was as perfect as the house which she inhabited.

" Would you like to see the place? People sometimes do," she said, stopping before him. " If so, I'll show you round."

" That's what I came for," he answered.

She had a bunch of keys, and he followed her indoors and into room after room which she opened. Much of the furniture seemed gone, but some was left, and there were carved panellings and great beamed ceilings and a minstrels' gallery and armour, and oak staircases and stone fireplaces that were fit for a museum. There were family portraits and portraits of kings and queens, and of the duke who had married into this family and wasted his wife's portion, and once they stopped before a young woman in a Tudor costume with honey-coloured hair and clear grey eyes and just such a figure.

" That's Kate Farrimond; I'm supposed to be something like her, and we've the same name," said his guide. " She's done by a pupil of Holbein; that's why she's so good. An American wanted to buy it."

" And you wouldn't sell? "

" Not that; there are other things "; and she indicated the denuded room, from which half of the furniture had been taken.

Cornish was more interested in her than in anything she had shown him. When it was over and they had come to the gate-house doors by which he had entered, " It'll be two shillings," she said; " that's what they charge at Chatsworth or at Haddon Hall."

He paid up and hesitated.

" You'll come again and bring people? " she said.

" I'll come again." He felt like picking her up, her soft round cheek against his own, and carrying her off to the car he had left behind him in the village.

At dinner that evening everybody wanted to know where he had been.

" To Farrimond," he answered, " and there I met a girl with honey-coloured hair who asked me to come again and bring people."

" And will you? " asked his niece.

" I won't bring people."

" You're utterly priceless," said the girl, and laughed.

" You're pulling our leg," said his brother-in-law.

" What was it like, really? " asked his sister.

" An old house," he began.

" Another old house! "

They were sick of old houses.

The nephew, who appeared to be about the

only young man in the Hydro, was deciding whom he should dance with and whom he should leave out in the cold. "He reminds me of a tenor," thought Cornish; "and the young woman's a tigress looking vainly for her destined mate. That's one side of England, nowadays," he ended; "it must be that damned old war!"

III.

NEXT day Cornish was there again.

"I've seen the house; I wanted to see you," was how he opened.

"We can give you tea," she answered, rather puzzled, for the few visitors who came here always wanted to see the house. "And you've brought nobody?" she added.

"Not me!" he cried.

"I'll tell Frank."

She left him for a moment and went indoors.

"There'll be some tea in half an hour," she said, when she returned. "It won't be very grand. Would you like to see the gardens?"

"That'll be two shillings," he laughed.

She looked at him gravely and shook her head like a little girl; and like a little girl she answered, "No, I couldn't charge for that. But perhaps—perhaps you'll buy something?"

He followed her through a door that led to a walled garden and greenhouses where two men were at work. One was filling a cart with baskets of tomatoes and lettuces in bundles, and there were peaches and nectarines in smaller baskets. An old horse stood between the shafts. She was selling these too, thought Cornish.

"Would you like some?" she asked, timidly.

"Yes, lots. You can fill the car if you like. Peaches and things."

"And I've flowers as well."

She led him into another garden, full of roses and sweet-peas.

"I'll have as many as you can hold in your arms," he said.

She was pleased at that, and she called one of the men, who cut a huge bunch.

"They'll go in the car as well?" she asked.

"Yes, it's at the gate-house; I left it there."

She was as pleased as a child who has come across buried treasure.

He paid up what she asked, and it wasn't much, and she folded the notes carefully and put them away. "That's better than bringing people," she said, quite simply; and, "What are you going to do with it all?" she asked next.

"There are five of us, and my sister'll like the flowers, and there are all the other people at the Hydro."

"You're staying at a Hydro?"

"Yes, at Blackwell."

"With your family?"

"Yes."

"Then you're married?" she asked.

"Not yet."

"You're rich, aren't you?"

"I've what I want. That's being rich, isn't it?"

She saw his point.

THE old servant, whom she had already spoken of as Frank, waited on them at tea, and Cornish noticed that he addressed his mistress as "Miss Katie" when he took her orders or asked a question.

They were in a part of the house now that Cornish had not seen on his first visit. They had come to it by a staircase on which hung a huge chart or pedigree, illuminated and emblazoned, showing twenty generations of Farrimonds and whom they had married and whom they had begotten and the dates of birth and death. And so many of them seemed to have married heiresses, thereby adding land to land, one estate to another. Their name and their pride in it and their possessions had owned them and carried them on. That was why they had survived for so many years. Others might marry for love or for passion, but these would not survive.

"I'm the last," she said, at his elbow, "and now there's nothing of it left."

"But why?" he asked.

"Taxes—it all seems to have gone in taxes; and now the war has finished us—there's only me."

"But you'll have to marry like these people," and he pointed to the chart.

"I know," she answered. "That's the only way."

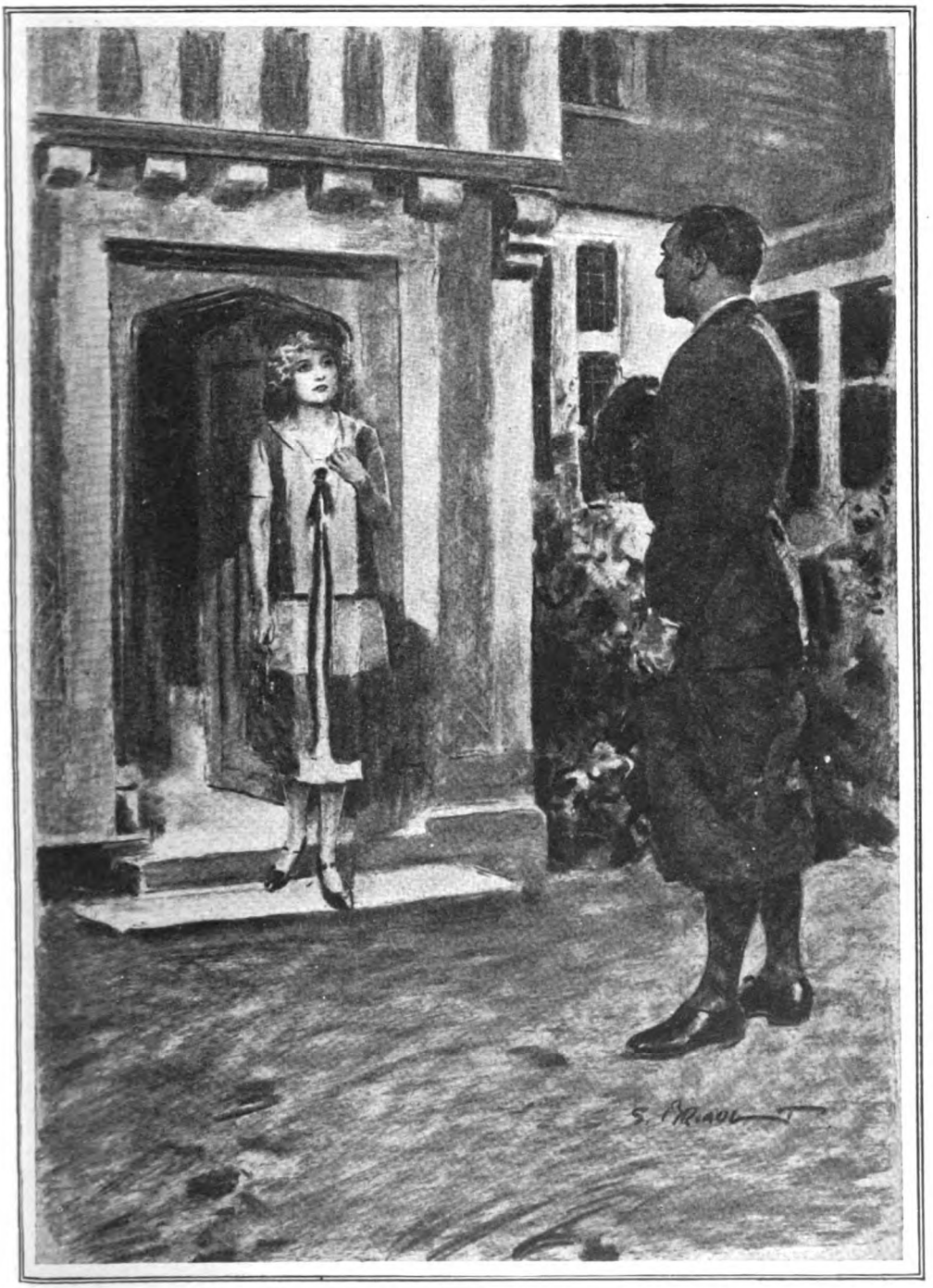
She was, apparently, resigned to it, and waited the coming of the man who should save her house.

"Well, it was worth saving," thought Cornish, looking out of one of those mullioned windows which gave on to that grey stone court.

"You live alone here?" he asked, as they sat at tea.

"There's Frank and Emily—they're left." They had been with her father and grandfather and her two brothers, he discovered.

When he rose and she came down with him to the little car that was full of peaches and nectarines and flowers, "No, I couldn't take anything," she said, meeting what he had hesitated to put into so many words.



"Would you like to see the place? People sometimes do," she said.
"That's what I came for," he answered.

He drove away from there, and the desolation of this splendid place followed him and pierced him to the heart.

"No, I'll never come back." he said, facing the glorious breeze that came to meet him, that set him all a-tingle as the car raced upwards and found the open moors.

At the Hydro he placed the flowers and fruit on their table. They would be a surprise for his sister.

"But such piles of them!" she cried. "You oughtn't to waste all that money."

"I don't think it'll be wasted," he said.

"No; there's Mrs. Curtis and her girls. I'm sure they'd like some."

He wasn't thinking of Mrs. Curtis. He was thinking of Kate Farrimond.

He watched his booty disappear among the chosen of the Hydro.

"What shop did you get them at?" asked his niece. "Anywhere in the town? They're so good."

"I got them at Farrimond."

"Oh, you and your Farrimond! I don't believe there is such a place."

"Nor do I," he answered.

IV.

IT seemed like an incredible dream, even to him who had been there. Kate Farrimond, with her honey-coloured hair, grey eyes, and lovely shape, alone in that strange, dreamlike house with the two old servants—amid the prose of the Hydro, these things seemed incredible! And yet they were real, as real as the death duties and taxation which had brought this once proud name to something wan and ghostly; unless—— He could save her and her house; he was rich enough. But it meant—he knew what it meant. One more victim, one more life enslaved, to carry on that place of ancient splendour. Farrimond would own him, just as it had owned its bygone generations, just as it owned its present mistress, snared and enmeshed in its cruel service. This morning he hated the place and would never return to it.

Instead, he drove with his niece to Lockton, a second watering-place, more fashionable and more renowned than Blackwell. They lunched at the Royal Hotel, they listened to the band, they joined the crowd of well-dressed people who lounged in the gardens or sat watching a tennis tournament.

"Why didn't father come here?" asked his niece; "there are heaps of men."

"You like men?" Cornish chaffed her.

"Who doesn't?"

She, at least, was frank about it.

"Next week I'll be back at work," she said.

"You needn't, if you don't want to."

"It's better than mooning at home and asking father for money."

He admired her pluck. He must find himself a girl like that, he thought. But next day he was back on the open moors and making for Farrimond.

He found Kate Farrimond in the second walled garden.

"I've come to take you for a drive," he said.

"I'd love that. But who is to show visitors round if any come?"

"There's Frank and Emily; and nobody will come."

"Nobody does come—but you," she answered, ruefully.

She went to get a hat and a coat, and he followed her indoors. "Don't hurry," he had said.

He knew the lie of the house pretty well now. She found him in the beamed and panelled gallery, with its portrait of the Kate Farrimond after whom she was named and who was so much like her.

He took her to Lockton, the fashionable spa, where yesterday he had loitered with his niece, and it was the first time that he had seen her among other people; and though she was so plainly dressed and so simple, they all looked common beside her. As though he had placed Farrimond beside some new and unnamed house in a street of common houses.

Her clear grey eyes rested on this scene under her grey felt hat. She liked the people and the music; she liked the dinner they ate at the Royal Hotel. She sighed when it was over and it grew time to take her back.

"I want to stay," she said. The weight of Farrimond seemed lifted, as though she had forgotten it and were no longer under its spell. "Do you know, I think it must be fine to see the world, like these people," she said, indicating the diners. "I think I'd love it!"

Cornish said nothing; but that was just what he had wanted to know. It wouldn't hurt her, then, to be taken away; and he could show her the world. No one better!

"I'm going to marry you, Kate," he announced, when they pulled up before the house.

"Then you want Farrimond?" she answered, looking up at him through her grey eyes.

"No, I want you," he began.

"But you can't have me without Farrimond," she said, "can you?"

THEY were back again, and once more that cruel place had reached out with its savage claws and claimed her. Stronger than love, stronger than hate, he

"But such piles of them!" she cried. "You oughtn't to waste all that money."

knew it to be, shining there, splendid yet desolate, in the moonlight.

V.

IT was September before he came back to it. There had been family things and business things to settle, especially with the people on whose behalf he had acted during the Great War, producing oil and yet more oil. Not exactly heroic, was it? But that had been his job, and they had laughed when he had suggested one that was different. Tanks, lorries, tractors, vans, and cars—he and others like him had made these more than possible; in France and in Palestine, in "Mespot" and in Macedonia, in "German East" and "German West." Not exactly heroic, but it had to be done. And there was the rest of his family, brothers and cousins and aunts and uncles. Now he was free.

He drove in at the park gates, and the sadness and beauty of autumn had added splendour to splendour, a greater air of desolation to all that loveliness, to all that treachery which held men captive and would not let them go.

The car was loaded as for a long journey. Before the gate-house steps he pulled up; and it almost seemed as though she had been waiting. The happiness shone through her as the sun shines through stained glass. He caught her in his arms, kissed those grey eyes, those full red lips, her honey-coloured hair; and she answered kiss for kiss and clung to him.

"Then I needn't marry anybody else," she said at last; "there was a man——"

"Of course there was," cried Cornish.

"Oh, but I hated him!"

"Tell me about him later."

"I'll tell you everything."

"Not here. We'll drive away first. The day belongs to us; we'll spend it in the wilderness."

She left him, to get a hat and coat and make herself ready. "Don't hurry," he called after her. And then he followed her into the house, and came back to the car, and went back to the house again, and then a third time. The little two-seater was lightened of its load as they left Farrimond behind them.

He had her fast now, and he was never going to leave her. Never again! He told her that as they crossed the county and headed for Sherwood Forest. And Farrimond was forgotten, everything was forgotten, as though the pent-up fire and tenderness of generation after generation were fighting its way into the light. But when it was time to go her face fell, her heart grew heavy. She made excuses, she struggled against that return. "It's all right," he said.

"Yes, it's all right," she answered, wanly. "One has to go back to it, hasn't one?"

VI.

THEY had driven through the dusk, and next through the dark, which had overtaken them as they loitered, tasting the wind on the moors or warm pockets of air that lingered in hidden valleys—hot and cold, like the heart of her which beat against his own. But Farrimond was strong and had no pity.

"Shut your eyes," he said, as they came nearer and nearer.

"Why?"

"Shut your eyes," he commanded, and she obeyed.

They had halted at the bend in the drive, and before them stood Farrimond, a blazing mass, a rage of fire.

"I will, Hugh," she said; "I'll do anything you tell me."

He tied a silk handkerchief over them to make sure.

"Now!" he said at last, and she saw clear again.

They had halted at the bend in the drive, and before them stood Farrimond, a blazing mass, a rage of fire, flames leaping from all its beauty, painting the sky with red and gold, making the trees stand forth in that strange light which now uncovered both their faces.

The two old servants, Frank and Emily, came to them.

"You're safe," she said.

"We'd better make up a bed for you at the lodge, Miss Katie."

She nodded.

They were alone again, but for some straggling figures from the village above.

"Now you'll be free," he cried.

"It's all over."

The fetters had fallen.

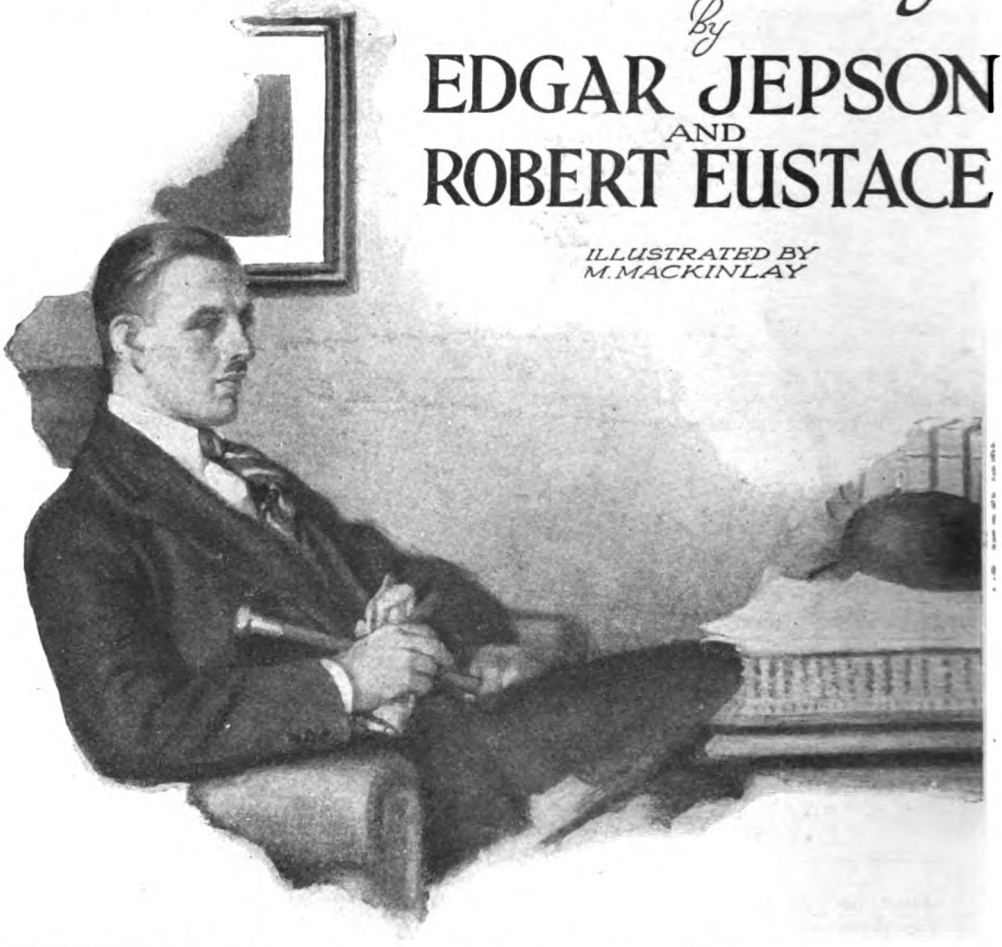
"It's all over," she repeated; and next, "You did it?" she asked.

"Yes, I did it—with a time-fuse and a carload of petrol. It was the only way, wasn't it? But now I've got you, Kate! Body and soul. You belong to me now. Not to all those desperate, clinging, pitiless things—not to Farrimond!"

Mr. Belton's Immunity

By
EDGAR JEPSON
AND
ROBERT EUSTACE

ILLUSTRATED BY
M. MACKINLAY

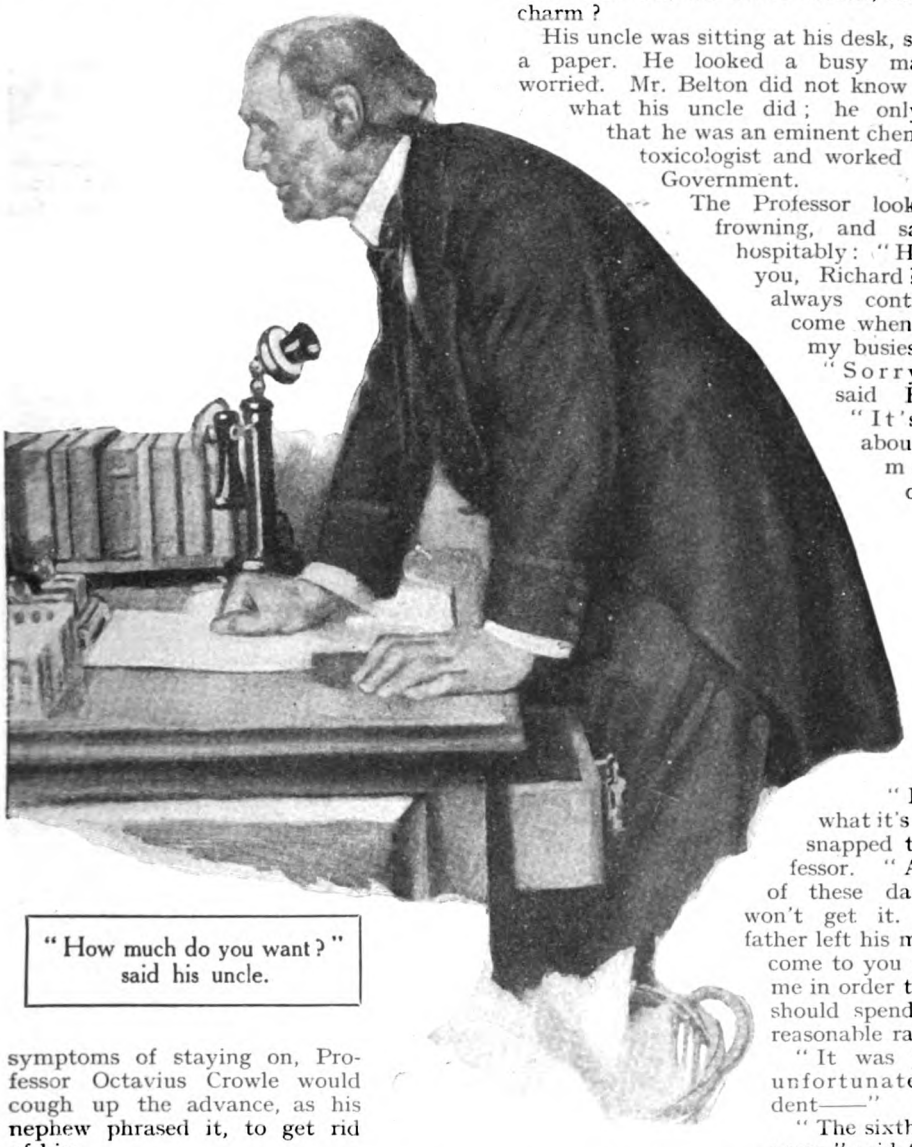


THERE is little doubt that, had not Miss Kitty Glentworth quarrelled so furiously with young Mr. Belton and cast him off for ever, he would not have gone on from the 99 Club to the large and beautifully-furnished flat of Mr. Cyril Montgomery—so much more Cyril than Montgomery—and lost two hundred and fourteen pounds at baccarat. It was an action for which he can hardly be blamed severely, because, when a young man knows clearly that his heart is broken for good and all, it is unlikely that his conduct will be directed by that sweet reasonableness so highly lauded by the late Matthew Arnold.

But there it was; he awoke next morning to no mean hangover and to the bitter knowledge that a month of the quarter had still to run and only eleven pounds on which to lead the life remained to him. It was not till the evening, however, that he realized that this was not to be borne. There was only one thing to do; that was to go to his uncle and guardian, Professor Octavius Crowle, and procure an advance on his next quarter's allowance.

It was no use writing to the Professor. That worthy gentleman had fallen into a shocking, but apparently rooted, habit of never answering his nephew's letters. It was the more distressing in that those letters always treated of the same theme, an advance on his next quarter's allowance. On the two occasions on which Mr. Belton had pointed out, reproachfully, that it was a shocking bad habit, the Professor had made

the disingenuous excuse that he was a busy man. This was, however, a fact; and it made it practically certain that if Mr. Belton went to see him and showed distinct symptoms of staying on, Professor Octavius Crowle would cough up the advance, as his nephew phrased it, to get rid of him.



"How much do you want?" said his uncle.

Gloomily, therefore, by reason of his broken heart, but with a cheery little hope of a cheque for a hundred floating about on the top of the gloom, at eleven o'clock next morning Mr. Belton took his way to his uncle's solid house in Bedford Square.

The door was opened to him by Maria Ann, whom he believed to be the prettiest parlourmaid in London, and whom, had his heart not been broken, he would have made a probably successful attempt to kiss. She greeted him with an uncommonly attractive smile; then, at his request, led him straight to his uncle's study with a rather startled air. Was she, she asked herself, losing her charm?

His uncle was sitting at his desk, studying a paper. He looked a busy man and worried. Mr. Belton did not know exactly what his uncle did; he only knew that he was an eminent chemist and toxicologist and worked for the Government.

The Professor looked up, frowning, and said, inhospitably: "How are you, Richard? You always contrive to come when I'm at my busiest."

"Sorry, sir," said Richard. "It's only about a little matter of——"

"I know what it's about," snapped the Professor. "And one of these days you won't get it. Your father left his money to come to you through me in order that you should spend it at a reasonable rate."

"It was just an unfortunate accident——"

"The sixth in two years," said the Professor, coldly; but his eyes softened a little as he gazed at his well-set-up, beautifully-dressed, blue-eyed, and amiable nephew.

"I'll just put the case——"

"You won't. I know what it is, or what it's like; and you'll waste half my morning putting it. How much do you want?" said his uncle; and he began to hunt among the piles of papers on his desk for his cheque-book. "I don't know why we have a

Public Trustee if people don't use him," he added, morosely.

"A hundred," said Mr. Belton, and a little of the gloom lifted from his spirit.

His uncle found his cheque-book and began to fill up a cheque. Mr. Belton smiled on him.

IN the middle of his timely action his uncle stopped short, and said: "By the way, didn't you tell me once that you were making a study of ciphers?"

Mr. Belton blushed. He had two vices that prevented him from being the complete young gentleman about Town: he was addicted to chess and cryptography. The polite world did not know this.

With an air of shame he said: "Yes."

"Then what do you make of this?" said his uncle; and he thrust at him the paper he had been studying.

To it was clipped a piece of parchment on which was drawn a square divided into hundreds of little squares, in each of which was a letter of the alphabet. They were in alphabetical order, alphabet after alphabet, with a Z in each corner square, so that they did not come exactly under one another.

Mr. Belton looked at it for about fifteen seconds; then he said: "Nothing. And nobody could without the key-word. It must be a *chiffre carré*."

"But if you had the key-word you *could* decipher it?"

"Rather," said Mr. Belton, confidently.

The Professor ran his long fingers through the disorderly shock of grey hair and gazed earnestly at his nephew; then he said: "Look here, Dick: would you like to earn some money?"

Mr. Belton's blue eyes opened wide in a certain consternation; he scented an effort to weaken his congenital disinclination to do work of any kind; he shuffled his feet uneasily; he said: "Oh, well, you know, I've got my little bit. It does me very well. And it doesn't seem quite fair to the fellows who like that kind of thing to go buttin' in."

"Yes, yes; a lily of the field," said Professor Crowle, unpleasantly and scowling. "But, after all, it's perhaps just as well. Though the Government will pay a big fee, it's a very dangerous job. The last man who had a shot at it came to a very painful end. But, of course, it was in the service of the country. It was only you being an expert in ciphers and a stout young fellow that put it into my head to suggest it. The Government will have no difficulty in finding someone else."

"Here; steady on, uncle," said Mr. Belton, with a sudden animation. "You say it's a dangerous job and for the good of the country and that sort of thing?"

'It is; and it's very dangerous."

Mr. Belton's ingenuous face darkened with a Byronic gloom; and he said: "Oh, well, I've got nothing to go on living for; I'll take it on."

A shadow of a grin of satisfaction wreathed the Professor's lips; then the gravity of his expression deepened; he said, gravely: "Wait a minute. Did you ever hear of the daboia?"

"No," said Mr. Belton.

"Well, the daboia, as the Hindus call it, is known to science as Russell's viper. It is a very pretty snake about six feet long; and its venom works about four times as quickly as that of the cobra. The odds are that in the course of this affair you'll get a dose of that venom injected into you. We are fairly sure that we can make you immune, but not quite sure. The anti-toxin is uncertain in its working."

"That's all right. I'll chance it," said Mr. Belton quite cheerfully. "It looks like lively doin's."

A faint, reluctant admiration softened the hard face of the Professor; he said, thoughtfully: "Well, you ought to be able to hold your own. After all, you were a captain in what you called a stunting regiment at nineteen and got the D.S.O. But you'll be dealing with very clever people and you'll need all your wits."

Mr. Belton nodded. He was already looking very much more intelligent.

His uncle went on: "Of course, the Home Office has excellent cipher experts, but none at the moment to handle a dangerous business like this. Either they're not the type, or they have ties which make it unwilling to call on them to take the risk. And only a cipher expert can handle it. Several people are looking for one of the right type, and I'm one of them. I was just considering how to set about it; and your coming to see me seemed almost provid—one of those curious coincidences, I mean, in which foolish and superstitious people see all kinds of absurdities. Well, the Home Office has seized some documents which should be of the greatest importance. But they're in cipher, this *chiffre carré*, and it wants the key-word. It knows of only one person in London who knows the key-word—a lady who mixes in Bohemian circles and calls herself the Princess Obrenovski."

"Not Bohemian, uncle—not Bohemian," his nephew protested quickly, and in pained accents. "Popsy would never be seen in a Bohemian circle, I give you my word. Only the high life for Popsy—always."

"Popsy! What the devil are you talking about?" said his uncle.

"We always call the Princess 'Popsy.' She looks like it, you know," Mr. Belton

explained. "But fancy Popsy being a Bolshi! I knew she was hot stuff; but I never guessed that. Still, you don't mean to say she'll sell the key-word?" He added in a tone of rather grieved surprise: "I always thought she was a sportswoman, Popsy."

"She'd sell it every day in the week, if someone produced the money," said his uncle in unpleasant but assured accents. "She's sold it once already. But the man she sold it to never got the chance of bringing it to us. He got the key-word, but also he got a dose of daboia venom; and that was the end of him. We know that it was daboia and not cobra—from the way his blood was clotted. And we know that he was helpless ten minutes after getting it and dead within the half-hour. Whether your friend injected it, or somebody else, we don't know. But his body was found in an empty bungalow at Thames Ditton four days after Princess Obrenovski received the money for selling the key-word to him."

MR. BELTON rubbed his hands together in a positively middle-class manner and said with genuine cheeriness: "Lively doin's! Lively doin's! But you don't mean to say that he parted with the money before he got away with the key-word?"

"He never had the money. You don't suppose he would carry a large sum of money with him into the surroundings in which a Bolshevist agent would sell a secret?" said the Professor with some impatience. "When he had received the key-word and tested it on a passage from one of these documents, he was to sign an order which would enable the Princess to draw the money. And it is practically certain that he was not poisoned, to prevent him getting away with the key-word, till after he had signed that order."

"Astucious," said young Mr. Belton in approving accents. "But I should never have guessed that Popsy had brain-storms like that. Still, she does seem a bit of a snake herself."

"A bit of a snake!" said the Professor with immense asperity. "A much worse snake than any daboia that ever lived!" He paused, scowling; then he went on: "Well, the Home Office wants that key-word quickly and it will pay you five hundred pounds for getting it—and your expenses. I take it from your paying me a visit that you are very short of money."

"Well, as a matter of fact, you're right, sir. At the moment my name is Beanless Ben," said Mr. Belton, frankly.

"Then I'll give you a cheque for thirty pounds; and you can let me know what your expenses are," said the Professor. "Can you get in touch with the Princess at once?"

"To-night," said Mr. Belton, confidently. "If she isn't at the 99, she'll be at the Forty Sinners."

"And you said that she didn't move in Bohemian circles!" said the Professor, scornfully.

He wrote out a cheque for thirty pounds and gave Mr. Belton the document in cipher with the square clipped on to it. Also he gave him the order, which, once he had signed it, would enable the Princess to draw the money.

Then he said: "The anti-toxin had better be injected at the latest possible moment. I'll send a doctor to your flat at seven sharp to inject it. It'll take you a couple of hours to get over the effects of it; but then you should be immune from daboia venom for a good twelve hours."

"It'll be done, or I shall be done inside eight," said Mr. Belton, cheerfully, as he put the cheque into his note-case. He paused and looked at his uncle and grinned, and added: "If it doesn't work and I don't see you again, I'll just wish you good luck, sir."

The Professor frowned at him in a sudden disquiet, hesitated, and said: "I wish—I wish—oh, it'll work all right. And after all it is of the greatest importance that these documents should be deciphered; and it's time that you did something to justify your existence."

"So it is. So it is," said his nephew, cheerfully, and held out his hand.

The Professor gripped it and wrung it, and then came to the front door with him and let him out and said good-bye. He stood on the step and watched, with eyes full of disquiet, Mr. Belton stride briskly along the pavement and turn the corner, and twice he plucked rather nervously at his chin.

Cheered by the prospect of action, Mr. Belton kept forgetting for as long as eleven minutes at a time that Miss Kitty Glentworth had cast him off for ever. He made an excellent lunch, and with a friend attended a *matinée* of the latest musical comedy. He did not think it right to take the risk of passing out of the world without having seen it.

At seven o'clock the doctor, a cheerful, but beavered, man with an uncommonly clever face, arrived at his flat, injected the anti-toxin, and declared, with much more confidence than his uncle had shown, that Mr. Belton was now immune from the venom of Russell's viper for a good twelve hours. Feeling that he would like to know, if someone did contrive to inject a shot of the

venom into him, whether the anti-toxin was really working, Mr. Belton asked him how the venom acted. The doctor said that any not immune person who was bitten by the snake would first be afflicted with nausea and a splitting headache, presently become paralysed, and then fall into a coma from which he would not awake. He stayed on for nearly an hour watching the effects of the anti-toxin. It gave Mr. Belton considerable discomfort in the way of nausea, a headache, twitchings, and a temperature. At a few minutes past eight, after assuring him that the effects of the anti-toxin had been everything that could be desired, the doctor departed.

AT nine o'clock, feeling better but still rather shaky, Mr. Belton walked up to the 99 Club. He found the Princess Obrenovski, who had come early in order to get some dancing before the room became crowded, dining with another young lady. They welcomed his suggestion that he should join them.

Mr. Belton was not talkative. The anti-toxin was still troubling him. The Princess talked for the three of them. Her chief theme was herself. He kept looking at her with wondering eyes, trying to discover evidence of the serpent in her. He could find none. She was the perfect type of Slav woman with a dash of the Tartar in her. Nature had moulded her with clumsy fingers. Her cheek-bones protruded slightly; her unfinished nose was rather thick, with a rounded, rather protruding tip; her lips were rather thick and shapeless; her black hair was lustreless; her brown eyes were for the most part dull, though they lit up sufficiently when she talked; her figure was clumsy; she was well-meaning but rather heavy in the dance. She had many feelings and always talked about them. She could not be more than twenty-two.

Bearing in mind that this might well be his last dinner, Mr. Belton did himself well and drank plenty of champagne. His young companions did themselves well and also drank plenty of champagne. It was half-past ten before he felt like dancing; then he embarked on a fox-trot with the Princess.

The anti-toxin, or the champagne on top of it, had robbed Mr. Belton of any diplomatic tendency he may have possessed. He came straight to the matter in hand.

He said: "I've been told to push a little money at you, Popsy."

"Push money—at *me*!" cried the Princess in lively astonishment.

"Yes. It's a little business of a key-word to a cipher," said Mr. Belton in almost jocular accents.

He felt her stiffen against his arm; and she bent backwards to stare at him with incredulous eyes. He had a strange and uncommonly strong feeling that he was an intruder.

He was. In the mind of the Princess his activities were confined wholly to her social life; he had suddenly intruded into the political.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she said; but her tone did not carry conviction.

"Oh, it's quite all right," he said in a reassuring tone. "I'm not giving anything away."

He felt her relax. But again she declared that she did not know what he was talking about. They had gone right round the room before she had re-arranged her ideas about him and decided to treat with him. Then she made him give her his word of honour to tell no one anything about it.

Then, with a winning smile and in winning accents, she said: "Have you got the money, Dicky?"

"I have not—only an order to sign when I've got the key-word and tested it," said Mr. Belton.

She looked up at him with a languishing glance and said: "Then it will be all right if I tell you the key-word. You can sign the order at once."

"When I've tested the key-word," said Mr. Belton firmly.

"Don't you trust me, Dicky?" she said haughtily.

"Till all's blue. But instructions are instructions," said Mr. Belton rather more firmly.

She was silent; she appeared to be thinking hard.

It was unfortunate that Miss Kitty Glentworth, who was not on in the third act of the play "Driver's Folly," in which she had a moderate part, entered the room just in time to catch the winning smile and then the languishing glance. She had cast Mr. Belton off for what she had been pleased to consider his perfidy in making himself uncommonly amiable to another lady. They had often quarrelled about his amiability to other ladies. She did not make sufficient allowance for his natural bent. He never could refrain from being amiable to a pretty girl. He was like that. Now he was being amiable to the Princess. She had for some time suspected the Princess of designs. That suspicion was now verified. Of course, it was no longer any business of hers. She told herself that it was not. Nevertheless her beautiful eyes flashed fiercely as she scowled on the unconscious couple; she walked to a table with her head high, trying to rid her face of the scowl.

The Princess came out of her reflections and said with a yet more languishing glance: "But you *do* think I would deceive you, Dicky."

"Never!" said Mr. Belton, in loud, loyal accents. "I tell you instructions are instructions, and I've got to stick to them."

Undaunted, the Princess spent the next twenty minutes trying to persuade him to disregard those instructions; and her smiles grew yet more winning, her glances more languishing.

Miss Kitty Glentworth observed this softening process with an anger that grew more and more intense. She had not expected Mr. Belton to accept his dismissal without further protest or entreaty, or to recover from it so quickly. She had broken off their engagement deliberately; but she felt that this behaviour of his was outrageous. She was of an uncommonly jealous disposition; she felt, unreasonably enough, that she was being shamelessly robbed; her anger was becoming fury.

It was at last borne in upon the Princess that the political Mr. Belton was a very different person from the social one. She ceased to languish at him. Indeed, she cut the patter, came to the 'osses, and asked in a businesslike tone whether he had with him the means of testing the key-word. He said that he had, that she had only to give him the key-word and he would sit down and test it and sign the order inside of five minutes.

"But that is impossible!" she said, hastily. "I am watched—always." She paused, then added: "And you do not suppose that I know the key-word. I know only where it is. I can get it."

Mr. Belton had the strongest feeling that she was not telling him the truth. He looked round the room for those who watched her. He knew everyone in it. No one of them could be watching her. Few of them were capable of watching a child of five. But, of course, there were the waiters. Besides, she must have given the key-word to the man who had been poisoned, or he would not have signed the order; or had she merely put him in touch with the person who knew the key-word? That must be it. He could not see anything of the snake about her; he could not believe that she had had a hand in the actual poisoning.

"Well, let's go and get it," he said.

At the words a pleased light just flickered in the eyes of the Princess. She said: "Not together. My car is parked in Pardon Street. I will go and wait for you in it. Come in five minutes."

"Right-o!" said Mr. Belton.

She emptied her glass and rose and went. Mr. Belton looked at his watch. Agog for action, he kept looking at it. The five minutes passed slowly. Kitty, relieved by the going of the Princess, saw that he kept looking at it. He rose with an uncommonly alert air. Of a sudden another suspicion seized her: he was going to the Princess! She gave him about two minutes. As she came out of the door of the dancing-room he was leaving the club. She followed him, furious. She wished to make sure, then demonstrate to him triumphantly that he had the shallow and perfidious nature of which she had complained.

WHEN the Princess came out of the 99, a big, respectably-dressed man, in a bowler hat and No. 11 shoes, who was standing on the opposite pavement, moved down the street, keeping level with her. At the top of Pardon Street he stood still to light a cigarette. A motor-cyclist thirty yards down the street stopped tinkering with his engine and lit a cigarette.

The driver of a big car, sixty yards down the street, turned and said to its occupants, Detective-Inspectors Halliday, Gedge, and Tomkins, and the doctor who had injected the anti-toxin into Mr. Belton: "Here they come!"

The Princess sat down in the driver's seat of her two-seater and fiddled with the gadgets. The motor-cyclist tinkered again with his engine. For five minutes nothing happened. Then Mr. Belton came briskly down the street. As he was stepping into the car of the Princess, Miss Kitty Glentworth came round the corner. The Princess, getting her car out of the line, did not see her; Mr. Belton, talking to the Princess, did not see her. She broke into a little run, sprang into her own two-seater, and came out of the line just ahead of the big car containing the detectives.

It was just before the theatre traffic, and the going was good. In this order the four motor vehicles moved up Regent Street, the motor-cyclist twenty yards behind the Princess, Kitty Glentworth ten yards behind the motor-cyclist, the big car thirty yards behind Kitty. The Princess had not enough of the cunning of the serpent to guess that she was being followed; she had not been followed on that earlier journey to Thames Ditton. At Oxford Circus she turned to the left. The motor-cyclist and Kitty turned after her.

Then came the hitch. After Kitty turned, the policeman on point-duty held up the traffic; the big car was held up behind a bus and a taxi. By the time one of the detectives had run to the policeman and way was made for it nearly two minutes had been lost. The motor-cyclist, on the look-out, saw what had happened. When

the Princess turned up Orchard Street he pulled up and said a few words to the policeman at the bottom of it. Kitty Glentworth passed him. He bucketted up Orchard Street and passed Kitty. At the bottom of Upper Baker Street and again at the top of the St. John's Wood Road he stopped to speak to the policeman on duty. The Princess turned into the Grove End Road. There was no policeman at the corner of it. She ran along the Grove End Road and turned into that little *cul-de-sac*, Melina Place.

She had slowed down to turn into it; Kitty slowed down also, so that when she turned to follow and saw that it was a *cul-de-sac*, she was able to switch out of it and come to a stop just beyond the opposite corner, slip out of her car, and peep round. The Princess had stopped nearly at the bottom; she was standing on the pavement talking to Mr. Belton. She went through a door in the wall, leaving him there. He lit a cigarette and stepped back into the car.

The motor-cyclist ran slowly past the top of Melina Place. He saw the car of the Princess; he saw Kitty peeping round the corner. He turned, went back along the Grove End Road about forty yards, dismounted, and began to blow his horn—one long honk and two short ones—again and again and again. When the big car came to the policeman at the bottom of the St. John's Wood Road and learnt that he had not seen him, it would come back.

The Princess came through the door in the wall, hurried up the path of the little garden, went through the front door of the little house at the end of it and into a room on her right. It was panelled; an old oak gate-leg table stood in the middle of it, an older oak arm-chair, high-backed, with a very thin cushion on its seat, stood on the right of the fireplace, four old oak chairs stood against the walls, a cushioned oak settle in the recess on the left of the fireplace. She crossed the room to the arm-chair, pulled it to the top of the table, and took the cushion from the seat of it. Then she pressed a button in the back of the chair. Three inches from the edge of the seat, on the left, there shot up the needle of a hypodermic syringe. She pressed another button and the needle sank back into the seat of the chair. Smiling an uncommonly ugly smile, she went to the oak corner cupboard, in the corner on the left of the fireplace above the settle, took from it a pen, an inkpot, blotting paper, notepaper, envelopes, and a small bottle. She set the writing materials on the table in front of the arm-chair. Then she knelt down beside the arm-chair, took from under its seat a hypodermic syringe, filled it carefully from the small bottle, and put it back. She rose, a yet uglier smile wreathing her thick lips, and put the bottle back in the cupboard. Then she sat down in the arm-chair, wrote on a sheet of paper "Paris," and enclosed it in an envelope. With brightly shining eyes she hurried back to Mr. Belton.

"There is no one in the house. I have found the key-word," she cried in excited accents, waving the envelope at him. "Come along."

Mr. Belton sprang from the car and followed her through the door in the wall.

Another wave of jealous fury surged through Kitty Glentworth. She stood undecided for about twenty seconds, then went briskly down the street. To her surprise she saw the gleam of the key in the lock of the garden door. The unmethodical Slavonic mind of the Princess had caused her, in her excitement, to leave it there. Kitty opened the door a few inches and looked at the dark house. Then, resolved to have all the evidence of Mr. Belton's perfidy before demonstrating it to him, she stepped into the garden and shut the door. The motor-cyclist came quickly to the top of Melina Place, dismounted, and again began to honk a long honk and two short ones. In that quiet neighbourhood the sound would carry half a mile.

He never could refrain from being amiable to a pretty girl. He was like that. Miss Glentworth scowled on the unconscious couple, and walked to a table with her head high.

The policeman at the bottom of Orchard Street sent the big car up Baker Street; the policeman at the bottom of Upper Baker Street sent it up Park Road; the policeman at the end of Park Road sent it down the St. John's Wood Road. It ran past Grove End Road to Maida Vale.

The policeman at the bottom of St. John's Wood Road had not seen a two-seater car, driven by a lady and followed by a motor-cyclist. The big car turned and went back up the St. John's Wood Road slowly. It stopped at the corner of Hanover Terrace and then moved slowly on. Midway between Hamilton Terrace and the Grove End Road the driver heard a motor-horn honking a long honk and then two short ones again and again, away on the left. He drove quickly up the Grove End Road and came to the motor-cyclist.

The three detectives and the doctor stepped out of the tonneau. The motor-cyclist told them quickly that Mr. Belton and the Princess had driven down Melina Place, that a second lady had come in the car standing at the opposite corner, watched them, and gone down Melina Place after them.

"How long can we give them?" said Inspector Halliday to the doctor.

"Anything up to a quarter of an hour," said the doctor; and he looked at his watch.

"That will give the Princess a chance to make her get-away," said Inspector Halliday. "Just stick the car across the road and block it, Hawkins. It will save a lot of trouble if we collar her on the spot."

THE PRINCESS ushered Mr. Belton into the room furnished with old oak and pushed him into the arm-chair. She tore open the envelope, looked at the sheet of paper, and said in excited accents: "The word is 'Paris'!"

"Right-o," said Mr. Belton, cheerfully, and took from his breast pocket the document with the square clipped to it and set about decoding it. He worked at it for perhaps four minutes. At the end of the second minute he was frowning. The frown deepened.

Then he looked up and said: "A lemon. My name is *no!* Walter the Human Boo. Cough up the right word, Popsy darling."

"But it *is* the right word! It *is!* You humbug me!" cried the Princess.

"Oh, cough it up!" he said impatiently. The Princess stormed and protested for a good two minutes. Mr. Belton, unmoved, preserved an amiable air. The Princess ground her teeth. Then of a sudden she was calm.

"You're too clever, Dicky—much too clever," she said, with a queer laugh that bared her teeth a little. "But you promise that you'll sign the order whatever happens?"

"I've promised once," said Mr. Belton, impatiently.

"The word is 'Popsy,'" she said.

"Of course! It would be!" said Mr. Belton; and he took up the pen and got to work again.

The Princess stepped behind the chair and leant over the back, watching him. He could not see that she was scowling, that her nostrils were dilated, that she was breathing quickly.

The middle finger of her right hand rested, ever so lightly, on the button which worked the spring.

At the end of the second minute a pleased smile illumined Mr. Belton's face. At the end of the third minute he said, triumphantly:—

"This time you're right. And now for the reward of—vice."

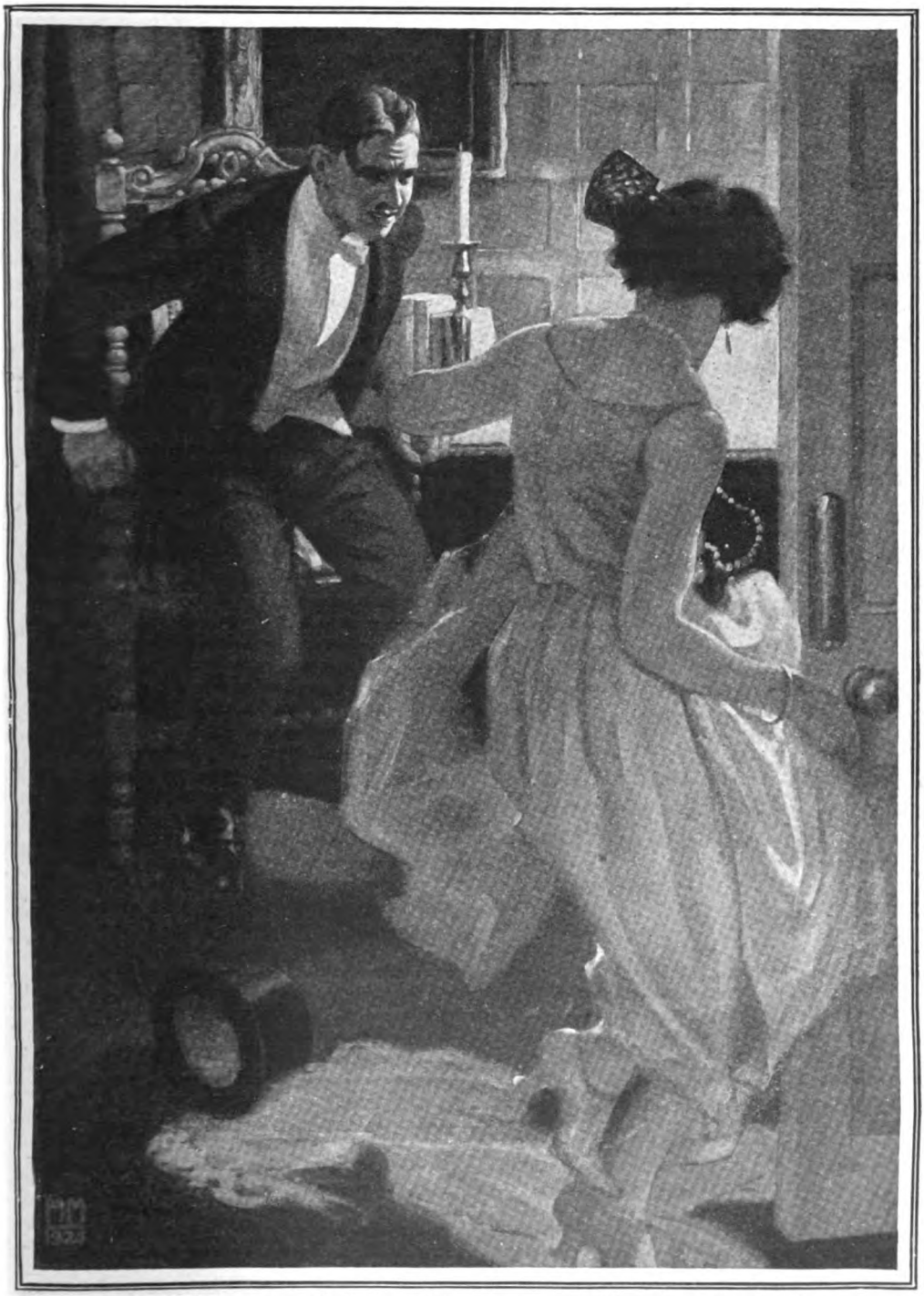
He took the order from his pocket and signed it. As his pen rose from the completed "n," the Princess pressed the button. The needle ran into his thigh. He sprang up with a sharp howl.

The Princess snatched up the order and was through the door like a knife. She snapped it to, turned the key in the lock, ran out of the house and across the garden to her car. She sprang into it, started it, turned, and came up the street, to find a clumsy chauffeur with his big car, half-jammed, right across the road, trying to back out of it. She shouted to him to clear out of the way and brought her car to a stop ten feet from his. Then, before she knew what was happening, Inspector Halliday had both her wrists in a vice-like grip and was hauling her out of the car.

As the door snapped to Mr. Belton swore. Then he dashed to it. The house might be old, but the lock on that door was new. He rushed to the window and threw up the sash. It was shuttered with heavy shutters, barred on the outside. He hammered on them and yelled. Someone in the neighbouring houses might hear him. He paused to listen for twenty seconds, then hammered and yelled again.

Kitty heard him hammering and yelling. It increased the astonishment aroused in her by the inexplicable flight of the Princess. She recognized the urgent note in his clamour; but she had no desire to help him. If in the course of the nefarious exercise of perfidy he had got himself into trouble, let him get himself out of it. At any rate, she was not going to help him at once. She was on the opposite side of the house to that at which he was hammering and clamouring; she walked round it and found that the unmethodical Princess had left the front door ajar. She stood hesitating what to do. Of a sudden Mr. Belton's clamouring and shouting stopped.

A sudden wave of nausea had swept through him. *The anti-toxin had not worked!*



The needle ran into his thigh and he sprang up with a sharp howl. The Princess snatched up the order and was through the door like a knife.

He came away from the window, drew a chair from the wall to the table, sat down on it, and stared in front of him with the dazed air of one who faces the worst, and that worst inevitable. There was no chance of getting to a hospital in time. These devils had only needed to make a prison to hold a man a few minutes and the poison would keep him in it.

The thought that he was going to die, painfully, inside of half an hour gave him a sinking feeling that increased the nausea. He had faced death often enough in the old days; but this was different. Then, at the very worst, there had always been a chance. This was hopeless. He stared at the wall in front of him without seeing it. He saw a hundred things, a hundred scenes. The dancing room of the 99 Club he had just left, the crowded theatre in which he had spent the afternoon came first, then scene after scene.

In nearly every one of them the chief figure was Kitty—Kitty happy, Kitty sad, Kitty angry, Kitty in ballrooms, on the stage, in restaurants, on the river, in the country. He had lost Kitty. He had not really believed that he had lost her when she cast him off. Now he *had* lost her. He had lost everything. It was not even slipping away; it had gone, absolutely gone. He almost sobbed.

THEN he pulled himself together and ground his teeth. A raging desire to balk the devils who had robbed him of Kitty and the bright world surged through him. He *would* get the key-word to his uncle. But how, with a few minutes of failing powers left, could he? Yet he must. He cudgelled his brains, rejecting device after device. Then the idea came. He took a sheet of note-paper, tore a small square out of it, wrote on it, in big letters and deep, "The key-word is Popsy," let them dry, rolled it into a ball and swallowed it.

There would certainly be an autopsy.

Another wave of nausea swept through him. He took another sheet of paper and began to write a farewell letter to Kitty. He wrote:—

"*My dear Kitty,*

"*You were absolutely wrong about Mabel Carruthers. I never did care a scrap for anyone but you, and you*——"

Someone tried the handle of the door. He turned towards it sharply. The key turned in the lock; the door opened; in came Kitty herself, her eyes still blazing, her face still pale. He stared at her with his mouth open.

"So I was quite right about you," she said in terrible accents. "The Princess *now*. The very moment you got rid of me! I should like to hear what you have to say for yourself."

"I *am* Walter the Human Boo," said Mr. Belton in a tone half exasperated, half dismal. "That's what I've got to say for myself. But get to my uncle at once—straight—and tell him that the key-word is 'Popsy.' Don't forget—'Popsy.'"

Kitty stared at him in a blank bewilderment. "What do you mean?" she said. "Are you mad or drunk?"

"Neither, worse luck," said Mr. Belton, in merely dismal accents. "I let that little devil inject a shot of daboia poison into me—Russell's viper, you know. I came to buy the key-word of a cipher off her. She's a Bolshi agent. The key-word's 'Popsy'—the damned little snake's own name!"

Kitty stared at him with her eyes opened their widest; her mouth went suddenly dry; the anger in her died in panic.

"What d-d-do you mean—d-d-daboia p-p-poison—Russell's viper?" she stammered.

"She fired a shot of it into my thigh. There's a needle in that cushion." He pointed to the arm-chair. "I'm a goner, old girl," said Mr. Belton quietly; and he rose and took her gently in his arms and kissed her.

His eyes seemed to be devouring her. They would not see her long.

"But there must be something to be done! Can't I—can't I suck the poison out of the wound?" she cried in desperate accents.

"You can't. The damned needle went too far in."

There came a banging on the garden door.

"Here they are! Get out! Lock the door! It's no good bothering about me," cried Mr. Belton. "The key-word—'Popsy'—is the important thing! Get off! Hide in the garden! Slip out when they come into the house! Get to my uncle with the key-word! And—and—yes—tell him that you're to have the five hundred quid for bringing it."

"I won't! I won't! I won't leave you!" she cried; and she threw her arms round his neck and, kissing him, burst into a storm of sobs.

The garden door went with a crash.

"I'm afraid you can't get away now. The devils will get you too! Oh, why didn't I think to bring a gun!" cried Mr. Belton; and he faced the door with his right arm round her waist.

It flew open, and in came Inspector Halliday, followed by the doctor.

"Did they get a jab at you?" cried the doctor anxiously.

"They got it—at least that little devil,

the Princess, did. The needle is in the cushion of that arm-chair. The key-word is 'Popsy.' Don't forget, 'Popsy,'" said Mr. Belton.

"Good man!" said the doctor. "How are you feeling?"

"As sick as a cat," said Mr. Belton.

"Then you must have had a devil of a dose! Off with your coat! Quick!" said the doctor; and he opened his bag.

Mr. Belton was quick getting his coat off and opening his shirt; the doctor was quick injecting another shot of anti-toxin. Then he pulled out a flask of whisky, with very little water in it, and made him drink all of it.

"Don't you worry. That'll set you right," he said, cheerfully, and made him lie down on the cushioned settle.

Kitty sat down beside him and took his hand and stared at his pale face with eyes full of anguish.

The other two detectives came in with the Princess. She was snivelling. Inspector Halliday took the cushion from the arm-chair and gingerly he examined it. Then he ripped the cover off it and spread the stuffing on the table and searched it thoroughly.

"But there isn't any needle," he said, in puzzled accents. "It must have been your imagination, Mr. Belton."

"Imagination be damned!" said Mr. Belton with extraordinary tartness. "My thigh is stinging like the devil. Take a look at the chair—perhaps it's in the chair. I heard a click—two clicks."

The Inspector examined the seat of the chair and found the hole up which the needle shot.

"Try the back. The little devil was leaning against the back," said Mr. Belton, who was still taking notice.

"I was never near the chair! I did nothing! I did not know about the chair!" cried the Princess.

No one took any notice of her. The Inspector found the right button and pressed it. Up shot the needle. He laid the chair on its side, and found, screwed to the bottom of it, a little box that evidently contained the mechanism which raised the syringe and thrust in the plunger and forced the poison out.

"That's fine!" cried the detective. "All the evidence of attempted murder will be in this box—a long stretch for the lady."

The Princess protested shrilly and snivelled louder.

FOR the next five minutes they were busy taking down Mr. Belton's exact account of what had happened. He signed it. Whether it was the whisky, or whether it was the second shot of anti-toxin, he was feeling no more sick than he had felt. If anything, he was feeling less sick. Kitty sat, still holding his hand and gazing at him with eyes which held a world of passion and despair.

At intervals the doctor felt his pulse and made cheering remarks. The Princess snivelled on. Inspectors Halliday and Tomkins went away to search the house. The minutes passed. A little colour came into Mr. Belton's cheeks; his eyes grew brighter.

Of a sudden he sat up on the couch and said in a tone of satisfaction: "I'm feeling better. That anti-toxin must have caught on."

In her relief Kitty buried her face in her hands and cried in the most unaffected fashion.

Mr. Belton patted her back and said: "Steady on, old girl. There's nothing to worry about now," slipped off the couch, stood up, and shook himself.

"You're right. You'll be all right now," said the doctor, cheerfully. "But take it easy for a day or two. And you'd better get home and get to bed. We've got the lady and the chair."

Mr. Belton wasted no time. He thanked the doctor, slipped his arm through Kitty's, and marched her out of the house. On the steps she took a tight hold of his arm and supported him carefully all the way to her car. He did not need support, but he appeared thoughtful. She took the driver's seat and started.

Then he said, thoughtfully: "Seeing how you've been—what you've been saying and doing, I don't believe you meant all you said the night before last."

"I was a little beast!" said Kitty, remorsefully. "I didn't mean *any* of it."

Mr. Belton's method of expressing his relief interfered with her driving.

PLUCK IN MANY COUNTRIES

By

ROSITA FORBES

Illustrated by
ERNEST PRATER

THE bravest people are generally those we don't hear about. They are not the men and women who have never known fear, but those who know it so well that it needs all their will-power to conquer it.

Some years ago I was in New Guinea with another girl. We were driving a buckboard up to the foot of the mountains, where pack-ponies awaited us. We stopped to lunch at a hemp plantation, and the owner told our cart to go round by a ford and meet us at the other side of the river.

"You can save two hours' trek by crossing a rope bridge we've got—you don't mind alligators, do you? The water's stiff with them, so watch your step!"

We laughed, and in due course, fortified, as far as I remember, with sucking-pig and bustard, we started for the river. The so-called bridge was a yard-wide strip of netting, slung fifty feet above the water. There was a rope to hang on to as well, but time and weather had played tricks with both, so that, midway, the passenger was fully extended, his feet on the sagging mesh, through whose great holes he could see the oily grey water, and his hands stretched to their utmost limit to keep hold of the rope above his head. If he lost his balance, or stepped a little to right or left, the bridge swung out like a hammock, and he ran the risk of being left suspended from his hands over the greenish-brown things below, that looked like logs, until they opened their mouths. Two or three of the plantation assistants ran across, with as much footwork as possible, to show how safe it was.

"Well, I'll have to say good-bye," said our host. "I've absolutely no head. Couldn't cross that thing for a million. It's as safe as houses, of course, but I can't even look down from a roof. Rotten, isn't it?"

We commiserated with him and started over the "bridge of repentance," as they called it. By dint of glueing my eyes to the opposite trees, I got across with no more than a jellyfish feeling in my middle, but my companion, Undine, stuck half-way. She was not very tall and she could hardly reach the rope above her.

"I can't do it," she said, and screamed. Two assistants precipitated themselves to her rescue, but the triple weight sagged the bridge still further, so that nobody had much purchase on the overhead strand. There were a few agonized moments while the girl was incapable of moving.

"Put your hands on my shoulders. Shut your eyes," ordered the man in front, but Undine did not obey.

"It's no good," she said, thickly. "I can't move." Shudder after shudder shook her, her feet began to slip, and, for a second, it looked as if all three must fall.

A voice from the bank steadied them. "Go back to the side. Leave her alone. Lie down, Miss ——, flat. Shut your eyes."

Undine dropped on to the netting, where, of course, she had good purchase.

"It's all right," said the voice, which I did not recognize. "I'm coming."

To our amazement, the plantation owner swung, sure-footedly, across the bridge. We stood frozen, scarcely breathing. "It's all up. He'll never do it," gasped a would-be rescuer at my elbow. But he did! Without hesitation, he bent over the girl, dropped the overhead rope long enough to pick her up—a miracle of balance—caught it again, and came grimly on. There was no faltering till half-a-dozen hands seized him at the bank. Then he almost swayed out of their grasp. He was dragged by main force into safety. "Magnificent!" I began. "You saved——" but the unheeding hero staggered to a tree and was violently sick. After we'd

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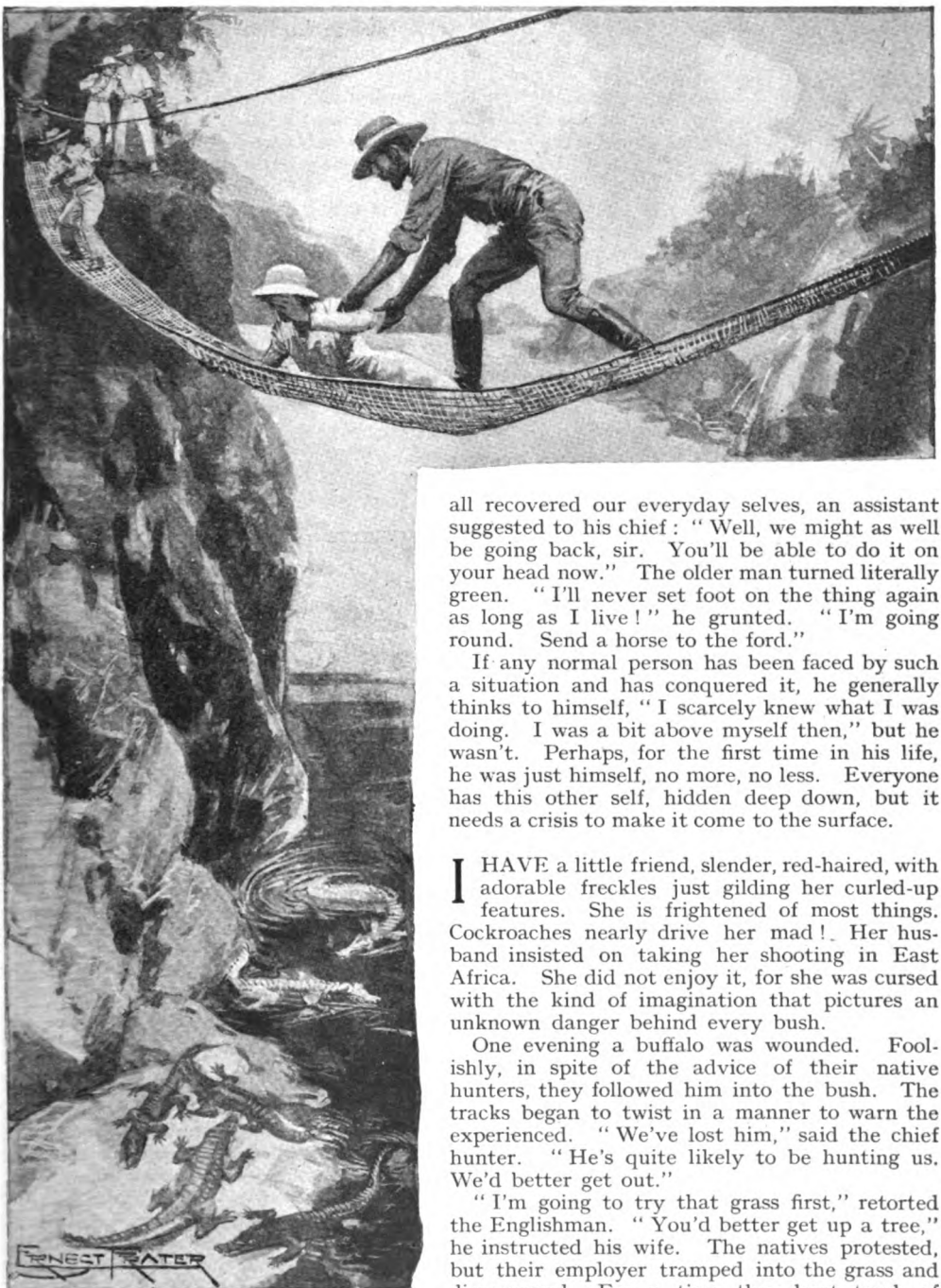


Without hesitation, he bent over the girl, dropped the overhead rope long enough to pick her up, caught it again, and came grimly on.

all recovered our everyday selves, an assistant suggested to his chief: "Well, we might as well be going back, sir. You'll be able to do it on your head now." The older man turned literally green. "I'll never set foot on the thing again as long as I live!" he grunted. "I'm going round. Send a horse to the ford."

If any normal person has been faced by such a situation and has conquered it, he generally thinks to himself, "I scarcely knew what I was doing. I was a bit above myself then," but he wasn't. Perhaps, for the first time in his life, he was just himself, no more, no less. Everyone has this other self, hidden deep down, but it needs a crisis to make it come to the surface.

I HAVE a little friend, slender, red-haired, with adorable freckles just gilding her curled-up features. She is frightened of most things. Cockroaches nearly drive her mad! Her husband insisted on taking her shooting in East Africa. She did not enjoy it, for she was cursed with the kind of imagination that pictures an unknown danger behind every bush.

One evening a buffalo was wounded. Foolishly, in spite of the advice of their native hunters, they followed him into the bush. The tracks began to twist in a manner to warn the experienced. "We've lost him," said the chief hunter. "He's quite likely to be hunting us. We'd better get out."

"I'm going to try that grass first," retorted the Englishman. "You'd better get up a tree," he instructed his wife. The natives protested, but their employer tramped into the grass and disappeared. For a time they kept track of him by the waving stalks. Then even this trace disappeared. Silence came with the sunset. A ghost of a sound broke it—it might have been a distant cry. The little red-haired girl, who was frightened of anything sudden, remarked that she was going into the grass to look for

her husband. The natives laughed. "The old bull is in there somewhere and it'll be dark soon," they said.

My friend took no notice, but marched into the grass. Her followers hesitated on the edge, called to her, argued for a few minutes, then ran away. It must have been twilight between those great stalks, but the girl blundered through them, her heart thudding so noisily that she heard none of the evening rustlings, the little creeping things and small animals slipping out to water. She found her husband. He had stepped in a hole, pitched forward on to his head and a stone, and was momentarily stunned. His wife pillowed his head on her knee, and doubtless tried the usual inefficient first aid. There was no result, so she picked up the rifle and sat hugging it, in the middle of a nightmare darkness punctuated by sounds imaginary and real, and by twin points of light that were the eyes of unseen animals. In due course the man recovered consciousness, the moon rose, and they stumbled out, but not before the red hair was faintly streaked with grey!

MEN are always supposed to have more courage than women, probably because they have more opportunity of showing it. The courage a woman brings to the problems of life, to leaking pipes, refractory kitchen ranges, teething children, and inadequate budgets, to the hundred small troubles that pile into an intolerable whole, is as great as the pluck a man brings to action. Moreover, woman is an adventurer at heart. She is always anxious to look over new horizons. She likes experimenting in originality, even if her scope is limited to floral or culinary decoration! A man may be on the look-out for something new in business, but the last thing he wants is something new in life!

I'm always being asked, "How can you, a woman, do these terrific journeys?" and my answer is inevitably, "It's because I'm a woman that I can do them." Women ought to make good explorers, because they haven't enough dull common sense to know when they're beaten! Their imagination will always show them just one possible or impossible way out!

But the finest courage they contribute to life is connected with their wifehood or motherhood. A thousand sacrifices are made daily on these altars. They are most spectacular where life is hardest.

In the polar North, where the problem of existence is narrowed to food and shelter, an Eskimo mother has often cut off her finger to provide nourishment for her child.

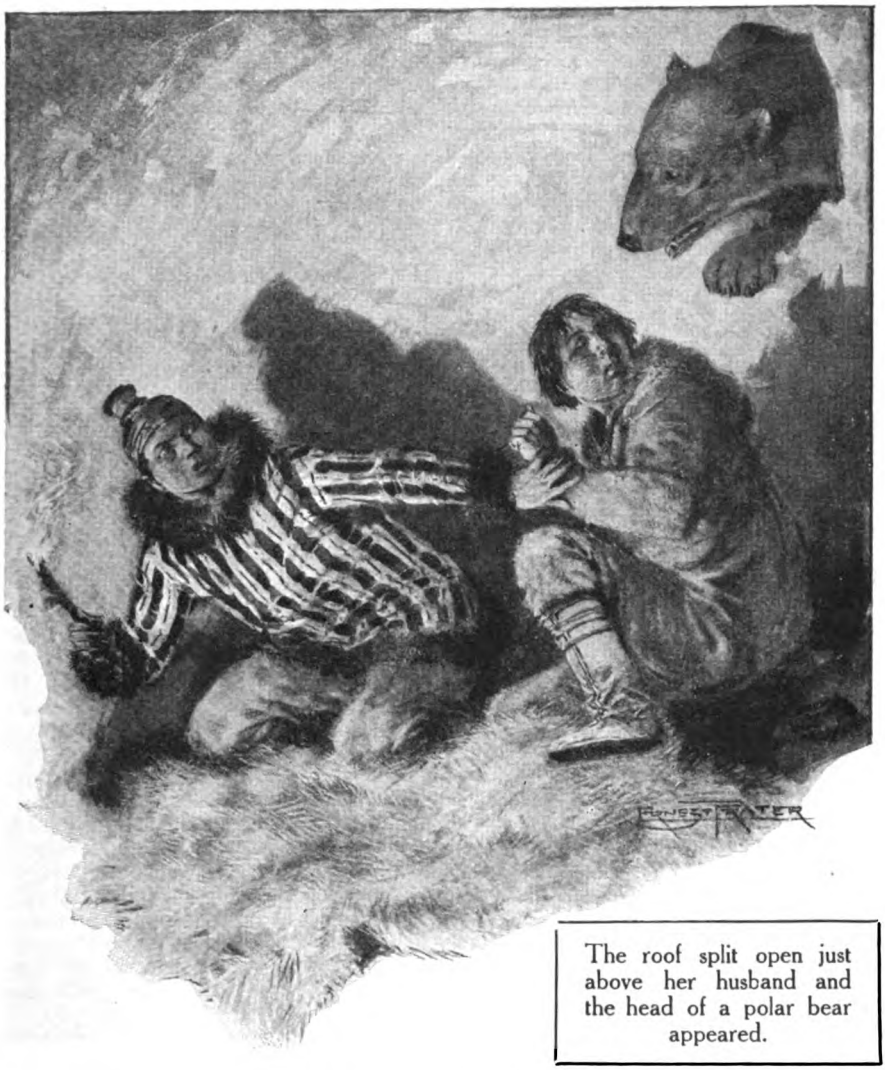
In an igloo, a hut built of frozen snow, a wife, lying beside her husband, under rugs made of seal and bear fur, was wakened by something falling on her face. It was not the season for a thaw, so she was amazed to touch crumbling snow. A moment later the roof split open just above her husband and the head of a polar bear appeared. The harpoons were, as usual, outside. The man was weaponless and the beast was maddened by hunger. While the Eskimo hesitated his wife seized a stick, dipped the end into the seal oil which spluttered in the lamp, and waved the impromptu torch in the beast's face. With this she kept him at bay until her husband could burrow through the door and reach his harpoons.

An Eskimo woman who had been widowed by a bear lived on a frozen river with her only son, a boy of twelve. They existed by means of the scant fish they could catch, but that particular winter the ice was solid and they had to depend on the boy's bow and arrows. One day, wandering along the banks with their dogs, they came upon a polar bear who was nearly as hungry as they were. The dogs brought the monster to bay. The boy loosed an arrow, but, though his aim was true, his strength was not sufficient to kill the bear. Again and again he used his bow. The animal was getting tired, but with claws and fangs it could still keep the dogs at a distance.

"One more arrow!" encouraged the mother.

"I haven't got one," returned the boy, and showed an empty quiver. The Eskimo woman heard the catch in his voice. They wanted food badly. If they were forced to kill the dogs, their hunting would be at an end. Lips grim, she waited her chance. While the bear was occupied with a dog, she dashed at him, dragged an arrow from his flank, and returned to her son with the new weapon. The famous polar explorer (Mr. Flaherty) who told me this story insisted that triumph lent strength to the youth's last shot, and the bear provided a month's plentiful food!

THE bravest thing I ever saw done was not at all spectacular. It was in the Australian bush, where a little mouse of a woman, with nondescript colouring and a nondescript mind, ran a somewhat untidy station with an overworked and undernourished husband. They never had time to do anything because shearing or branding or lambing claimed all their attention. They hadn't time to eat or sleep or wash enough. Their whole world, their whole outlook on life, was summarized in the one word "sheep." Then, one day, the only child, aged six, got diphtheria. The nearest doctor was three hundred and eleven miles away, over rough downland and through



The roof split open just above her husband and the head of a polar bear appeared.

blue gum woods. As usual the parents hesitated.

At last, when it was almost certainly useless, the man started off in a Ford to get the doctor. It would take thirty-six hours at least, probably more. The child got rapidly worse. It could hardly breathe. The mother fluttered round, pitifully indecisive. I spoke of tracheotomy. "If the doctor comes in time," I added. The woman stiffened. "Do you know the place?" she asked in a voice that was suddenly firm. "No," I returned hastily. She ran her finger down the child's throat, which was contorted in the effort to breathe. "I must try it," she said. "It's the only chance." With the utmost precision she sterilized a penknife and a hairpin. "You must hold him," she directed. I did, but with my eyes shut.

Unfaltering, she opened a passage, washed it, held it open with the hair-pin. I was frankly terrified, imagining (aged twenty) that the boy would die and I should be an accessory to murder.

On the contrary, the child's breathing grew easier. When the doctor arrived, the first thing he did was to congratulate the mother. "But of course you've seen the operation done! You must have been in a hospital." She shook her head. "No," she said. "I read of it, that's all." Within the next few minutes she'd upset half-a-dozen things, blundered into a table, behaved so clumsily, displayed such trembling hands that I couldn't recognize her as

the sure-fingered surgeon of a few hours ago.

MOST of woman's heroism is a matter of love. Man's is inspired by patriotism or mere habit, by lack of imagination, a good digestion, and perhaps above all by sport. What sacrifices has masculine vanity not laid at the clay feet of his idols, big-game hunting, steeplechasing, flying! I have seen many a cross-country rider white-lipped at the start.

In Tripolitania I flew in a small Sfa machine. When I arrived at the aerodrome the usual pilot was away. The superintendent casually ordered a wan youth to take me up. We wobbled horribly in our flight, though there was no wind. I inquired the reason, apologizing for my anxiety by saying: "You see, I've never been up in this kind of machine before."

"Neither have I," retorted the pilot, gloomily.

"Why on earth didn't you say so in the aerodrome?" I gasped.

"The fellows would have thought I was afraid," he returned, half-sulkily.

"Well, I *am* afraid," I said, firmly. "You can tell them all so and we'll land at once." We did, with a shock which upset the Sfa more than us.

NOT only is it not in the least brave to do a dangerous thing you're not frightened of, but it's not brave to do it even if you are frightened, unless it serves some useful purpose.

The young man who, unable to swim, threw himself into the Seine last winter to rescue a workman who had missed his footing on a barge was merely foolish. The workman, who happened to be a very good swimmer, had great difficulty in saving his would-be rescuer!

Courage, above all things, means keeping your head. To prove its possession, it is not necessary to run purposelessly into danger. It is only necessary to remain calm when you are there.

A friend of mine was lion-shooting with her husband in Rhodesia. She got tired half-way, and decided to rest under a tree with a packet of sandwiches till the others returned. As an afterthought her husband tossed his revolver into her lap. "You might as well have it just in case——" he remarked.

"Lions don't attack human beings," retorted Eve.

But unfortunately this particular lioness did! Whether she was hungry, or her cub had been killed, or what reason she had for breaking all the rules of the game, I don't know. She appeared suddenly from nowhere and crouched, with attack written in every line of her, from flattened shoulders to twitching tail. There were two bullets left in the revolver, and a Colt is not a suitable weapon against lions. It will kill at a few feet range, that is all.

Eve knew she had nothing to waste and she was no shot. She waited while the lioness stalked her, she waited till the beast sprang, and then she fired her two shots into its mouth. It died within a yard of her.

It must have taken some nerve to wait. Most people would have missed or merely wounded, by firing at a range which they knew futile.

IN Morocco I heard of a girl who set out to avenge her whole family against the conqueror to whom her father had been obliged to promise her in marriage. In those days the Sherif Raisuli, brigand, warrior, and Sultan of the Moroccan mountains, was in the habit of decorating the fences of his enemies with the decapitated heads of their sons. The bride, who was to seal the treaty of peace, had watched her brothers suffer in this manner. There was no man left in the household, except the aged father, too infirm to offer further resistance. The wedding-day came. The bride was sent to Raisuli's house, but she refused to touch his gifts. She would not eat or drink. She would not wear the wedding finery. All the afternoon, while the women made merry in the next room, she sat in a corner silent. The feasting and the music lasted till the hour of the evening prayers, but still the bride crouched in her corner, one hand hidden in her bosom. At last Raisuli came in to her, while two slaves stood in the doorway, holding platters of dates and milk, symbols of fertility and chastity.

"Allah give you peace," said the bridegroom.

"There can be no peace between you and me," retorted the bride. "See—I would not touch your gifts; but, since there is no man left to avenge our house, *I* bring *you* a gift." She drew a knife from her bosom and struck at the huge figure in front of her. The blade glanced off the jewelled belt-buckle and fell out of her hand.

For a moment there was silence. The knife lay on the floor between them. The slaves were dumb with terror. What awful fate would happen to the woman brave enough, mad enough, to strike the Sherif? The ordinary penalty for a wife who attacks an ordinary husband is slow strangulation, but, a descendant of the Prophet, their lord was holy, his life beyond earthly price.

Slowly Raisuli stooped and picked up the knife. "Strike again," he suggested, offering

it to the girl. " Your aim was bad, but you cannot hurt me, for I bear a charmed life."

Shivering, the bride took the dagger. With a sudden movement, she drove it into her own heart. The slave who told me the story ended it with these words : " The poor one fell at my master's feet and she cursed him before she died. He looked at her for a long while, but he said nothing."

" Strike again," he suggested, offering the dagger to the girl. " Your aim was bad, but you cannot hurt me, for I bear a charmed life."

YEARS ago I was camping in the Rockies with the same Undine who lost her head on the Papuan rope bridge. We were too broke to have a proper outfit, so we just tramped over the passes with one pack-pony. Doubtless we got off the usual trails, but we had food, blankets, a kettle, so we didn't care. One night we slept in a ramshackle hut, tethering our pony by the stream. I remember a porcupine yowled outside, and the pine branches, which we thought would make a nice bed, were prickly—altogether rather a disturbed night. At dawn our pony began squealing. We looked out to see what was the matter. A very large bear was approaching the helpless animal, which could not break its halter. Now, I don't know anything about the habits of bears. They may be harmless, but that one looked remarkably purposeful. It was obvious that something had to be done. But we had no more formidable weapons than the kettle. Also it is very difficult to be brave when one is cold, hungry, and not at all angry ! I was just wondering whether the pony would satisfy the bear or whether it would need us for dessert, when Undine rushed out of the hut, brandishing my scarlet parasol like a club. The bear stopped to look at her. My companion dashed straight at him and opened the parasol under his nose. The suddenness of it surprised him, or perhaps he did not like the colour. In any case, he departed with dignity and a suspicion of haste.

" Weren't you frightened ? " I asked.

" Not much. Bridges and birds are my pet terrors," she replied.

I suppose we all of us have our own particular fears, but, thank Heaven, they are generally such unexpected ones that the rest of the world never guesses them !

"Isn't there a man among you?" she cried. "Won't someone go in after him?"

A Splash of Publicity

By

MICHAEL JOSEPH

Illustrated by
A. E. BESTALL

IS there anything more depressing than being an unsuccessful artist? If you happen to know one, ask him and see what he says. His studio is probably full of the mute evidences of his failure. He hasn't the courage to destroy his unappreciated efforts. And as a rule he lacks the means to escape from their depressing influence by renting another studio.

Whatever Charlie Potts may have been, he certainly was unsuccessful. Of course, his name told against him. In vain the bold signature CHARLES POTTS adorned painting after painting. No one wanted to buy them. In fact, no one liked them, with one exception—who deserves the next paragraph all to herself. His friends insisted on calling him Charlie, treating his pictures with familiar disrespect, and preferring to talk instead about racing, food, and other more important matters.

Only one person believed in Charles. That was Marigold. Marigold was his wife, and a very pretty, delightful wife she was. Charles has always said she was much too good for him, and as a friend of Charles I am inclined to agree with him. There was nothing especially noticeable about Marigold, except that she was attractive in a slim, graceful fashion, which somehow suggested initiative and determination. She didn't really look at all masterful, but you were conscious that if she had set her heart on something she would get that something in the end.

So that it was just as well for dear, easy-going Charlie that Marigold had made up her mind that he *must* succeed. Charlie had the relic of a war pension, luckily, but Marigold knew that something would have to be done soon, for three people cannot live on the fag

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end of a pension. Two could, and did, manage, with the aid of lots of laughter and youthful philosophy. But Petal would need more than that, reflected Marigold. She hoped it would be a girl, did Marigold, as she had made up her mind to call her Petal. Marigold was like that.

One fine morning, when the warm September sun filtered pleasantly through the trees, Marigold tackled the unsuccessful artist in earnest.

" Charles dear, you must listen," she said.

Charles obediently took the pipe out of his mouth and assumed the expression of an obedient but quite virtuous house dog.

" If you don't sell some pictures soon," she said, " we—shall—be—broke. Something's got to be done. Ever since the war you've been painting and you haven't sold a single, solitary picture."

" I know," said Charles, gloomily. " Don't rub it in."

" But, darling "—patiently—" other people sell heaps and "—loyally—" their work isn't a third as good as yours."

Charles brightened momentarily, then relapsed into melancholy.

" They get publicity," he said. " Sell anything with publicity nowadays."

He puffed away at his battered pipe, satisfied to have uttered such a profound truth. For a few moments Marigold watched the sun dancing on the waters of the river beneath. Then she thoughtfully tidied her cushions.

" Publicity," she said ; " publicity——"

" You're going to have an idea," said Charles, from experience. " Let's hope it's nothing strenuous."

" It is, Charles dear. *You* must have publicity ; we must invent a *stunt*."

" A stunt ? " echoed Charles, genuinely alarmed. He knew Marigold.

" Yes, dear," said Marigold, patiently. " Let me think."

And Marigold sat down determinedly and thought, while Charles strenuously puffed away at his pipe, hoping for the best.

" I can bear the suspense no longer," he said, with an attempt at cheerfulness. " From the light in your eye I can see I am in for it. What is it this time ? "

Marigold held up her hand.

" You are going to be drowned," she announced.

" What ? "

" Drowned. At least, rescued from drowning."

" I'm not," said Charles, firmly.

Marigold surveyed him with affectionate toleration.

" For my sake, Charles dear, you will. It's really a brilliant idea. You will fall into the river and I will shriek for help. Someone's bound to jump in after you, and when you're rescued——"

" Supposing I'm not rescued ? " interrupted Charles.

" You will be. Everybody always is. You're a splendid swimmer, so there's no danger. And when you're pulled out of the water, there will of course be crowds of newspaper reporters. I will deal with them. Think of the headlines, Charles ! ' Artist Rescued from the Thames.' ' Beautiful Young Wife's Story.' "

" And how," said Charles, " is that going to help us ? "

" Publicity," said Marigold, triumphantly. " Publicity. You said so yourself. And you must wear your oldest suit of clothes," she added as an afterthought.

Charles groaned. He knew objections would be futile. They always were with Marigold. He most certainly was in for it.

AND so, some days later, dutifully dressed in his most ancient suit, which was, as he pointed out to Marigold, exactly the same as his third best, Charles Potts fell into the river. The bridge they chose shall be nameless, for this is a story about publicity, and the Thames bridges have had quite enough publicity recently.

It was a warm day ; Charles had insisted on that, at least. They had carefully rehearsed everything in the studio. Anyone passing who had troubled to look at them standing against the parapet would have seen a young man in a shabby suit with a quite realistically worried expression and an attractive girl looking, now it had come to the point, decidedly pale. However, as it happened, no one took the slightest notice of them. The agitated conversation which they had planned reduced itself to brief but pointed observations on the part of Charles.

" It's a long drop," he said, casting an anxious eye over the parapet.

" You're not going to back out of it now, Charles ? " said Marigold, half hoping he would.

" No." He looked round, taking his bearings. " Well, here goes, old thing ! "

And, as our old-fashioned novelists love to put it, in less time than it takes to tell, Charles vaulted on to the parapet and jumped headlong into the river.

Marigold's scream was perfectly genuine. For a brief second she heartily wished they hadn't undertaken such a crazy adventure. But the sight of Charles's head bobbing on the surface of the water beneath somehow reassured her. If he had not seemed so very far away, she could have sworn he flashed a grin up at her before submerging in accordance with their plan.

This suddenly recalled her own prearranged *rôle*. Without further ado she clung to the parapet in a tolerable imitation of a half-fainting condition and began to shriek hoarsely for help.

There was really no need to shriek, for, attracted by her scream and the resounding splash Charles had made on entering the water, a fair-sized crowd had already collected around her and was increasing with extraordinary rapidity.

Out of the corner of her eye, at which she was dabbing furiously with an absurdly small pocket-handkerchief, Marigold observed with dismay that the interest displayed by the spectators was, to say the least of it, casual.

One elderly female stood by her side, peering morbidly at the river.

"Pore feller!" she said, with obvious relish. "Never see 'im no more."

Others struggled eagerly for favourable observation posts. But with a sinking heart it dawned on Marigold that no one was going to make any attempt at a rescue.

Supposing Charles had been unable to swim, and had really fallen in! Marigold suddenly flamed into passion at the thought.

She swung round and faced the crowd.

"Isn't there a man among you?" she cried. "Won't someone go in after him?"

"It's no good, miss," said the voice of the disreputable female at her elbow. "Talk about men! They're a shockin' lot nowadays. Now if *I* was a man——"

Someone in the crowd laughed. Marigold burst into tears—real tears this time. She felt ashamed. A hundred thoughts raced through her mind at once. What would Charles say? He wouldn't care, anyhow, if their scheme failed. He would just change his clothes, grin, and light his pipe. That would be much worse than reproaches, she thought bitterly. And this horrible crowd of people! How she longed to get away! Then she caught sight of a policeman's helmet, and the remnants of her courage vanished. What would happen now?

Quite suddenly an inquiring voice, a strong, compelling voice, pierced through the murmur. It was followed an instant later by a tall, athletic man vigorously elbowing a passage through the crowd. He reached Marigold's side just as Charles was patiently reappearing on the surface of the water, to all appearances a drowning man.

THE stranger took in the situation at a glance, and, to the accompaniment of vociferous cheers from the small boys and half-hearted applause from the others, stepped on to the parapet, glanced swiftly downwards, and, ignoring Marigold's outstretched hand, dived to the rescue.

Marigold's mind subconsciously registered the fact that he was well dressed and extremely good-looking. It suddenly struck her that his clothes would be completely ruined, and she felt horribly mean. But she could not disguise her relief that something had turned up to save the situation.

"Exac'ly like one of them Orstralians, ain't he?" the old woman said, admiringly. "What I call a proper gentleman. Now if——"

Her wheezy voice was drowned by the clamour of the crowd as it was seen that the stranger had seized the struggling figure in the water below and was steadily propelling him towards the shore.

"My! Ain't 'e a fine swimmer?" cried one of the small boys, shrilly. "And wiv 'is clothes on an' all!"

As the figure in the water drew in closer, the crowd began to make hastily for the steps which led down to the river's bank, and Marigold hurried in the same direction.

Somebody cried: "Make way for the young lidy!" And Marigold was thrust forward as Charles was in the act of being unceremoniously hauled up on to the river's bank. There was now no lack of willing helpers, and the crowd surged round the two dripping figures as if determined to miss none of the excitement.

"Stand back there," ordered the stranger, a dignified figure in spite of his soaked garments. Even the two policemen who now officiously pushed their way forward seemed to acknowledge the ring of authority in his voice and began to push the crowd back. The stranger proceeded to run an expert eye over the recumbent Charles, who was loyally doing his best to simulate complete exhaustion.

Marigold bent hastily over Charles. A glance satisfied her that all was well. So far, she thought triumphantly, everything had gone according to plan.

But where were the newspaper reporters? Anxiously she made a rapid survey of the seedy onlookers. Not one looked in the least like a reporter. Once more panic seized her.

Her hopes revived at a movement on the outskirts of the crowd. The new-comer, a clean-shaven man in horn-rimmed glasses, proved to be a doctor.

Marigold was getting desperate. She was just giving up hope altogether when suddenly two men emerged from the crowd and one produced a notebook from his hip-pocket.

The elder of the two men put out a restraining hand.

"Put it away, son," he said. "There isn't a story here. It's only another darn fool attempt at suicide. Let's get on."

Marigold nearly collapsed. Fate was against her. It really was too bad.

The tall stranger, who had divested himself of his coat and was methodically wringing water out of it, nodded to the doctor and began to speak to her. He had a pleasant voice, with a slightly American accent. She only dimly realized that he was trying to assure her that Charles would be all right if he were taken straight home, rubbed down with a dry towel, and put to bed. She failed altogether to notice his puzzled smile and his quick glance in the direction of her wedding ring.

Then, amazingly, the young man with the notebook pointed suddenly in the direction of the group and whispered something excitedly to his companion.

For a second the other looked incredulous. Then his expression underwent a complete change. He strode hastily forward.

"Excuse me, Mr. Brigadayne," he said, pleasantly.

The stranger swung round on his heel.

"What the——" he began. Then he laughed as if there was something funny about it after all.

Her attention absorbed by this strange development, Marigold became aware just in time that the doctor and policemen between them were removing the faintly protesting Charles in the direction of the road. Someone shouted distantly for a taxi.

This would never do. She turned to the newspaper men.

"They're taking him away!" she cried. 'I'm his wife. Aren't you going to——"

Her voice died away. The two reporters, one on each side of "Mr. Brigadayne," were scribbling away furiously, no longer aware of her existence. Tears of mortification came into her eyes.

It flashed upon her. Of course! Mr. Brigadayne—the famous Hubert Brigadayne, known to millions of film "fans" the whole world over as the hero of a thousand daring exploits on the screen.

In that moment she hated Mr. Hubert Brigadayne with an awful intensity. Why couldn't he have stayed in California, or wherever it was that film stars performed, instead of coming to spoil her carefully-laid plans like this? As if Hubert Brigadayne hadn't had enough publicity already! It was a disgusting trick to play on her. She determined to make one last effort.

The stranger proceeded to run an expert eye over the recumbent Charles.

"Don't interrupt, miss, please," said one of the newspaper men without looking up.

"Stop!" broke in the voice of Hubert Brigadayne, firmly. "I won't answer any more questions. I want to talk to this young lady. And I'm cold and wet, and want to be left alone."

The two journalists stepped back to avoid the sweep of his wet-sleeved arm.

Hubert Brigadayne seized Marigold by the shoulder and hurried her forward in the direction of the retreating crowd.

BEFORE Marigold could recover from her surprise the celebrated film actor had steered her rapidly past the onlookers, bundled her into a taxi which had drawn up beside the kerb, dismissed the doctor and the policemen, asked her address, given rapid instructions to the driver, got in beside her, and slammed the door.

The sudden jerk of the starting taxicab precipitated Charles on the floor. He sat up and regarded Marigold and the newcomer with a whimsical smile.

"I'm infernally cold," he said. "Of all the ghastly frosts——" He broke off abruptly. "I mean, it was very decent of you to jump in after me."

There was a long pause. Charles and his rescuer simultaneously began to shiver. The celebrated film actor stared hard at Charles.

Marigold broke the silence.

"My husband, Charles," she said absently. "Mr. Hubert Brigadayne."

"I guess we're going to have a nice long talk," said Mr. Brigadayne, pleasantly. "But some dry clothes are indicated first."

Half an hour later Charles, in spite of vigorous protests, was put to bed. Marigold and Brigadayne were sitting in front of a cheerful fire in the studio, Brigadayne looking like an overgrown schoolboy in an old tweed jacket and flannel trousers belonging to Charles.

"A hot drink makes a whale of a difference, doesn't it?" smiled the film star, putting down his teacup. "It's given me courage to ask you a question. Why did your husband fall in the river?"

Marigold hesitated—and was lost. In a few breathless sentences she told the truth.

Hubert Brigadayne, who had listened in sympathetic silence, waved aside her contrite apology.

"I was glad to get back to my job," he said, with a stray smile which indicated that his thoughts were elsewhere. "Now, publicity's just a fine idea. You leave it to me. Before I go I'd like to look over some of these pictures, if I may."

In the few minutes before his departure, Marigold, feeling, as she told Charles afterwards, a very poor body of troops, did her best to make the sincerity of her apologies evident. But Hubert Brigadayne insisted on treating the whole thing as a joke. He admired Charles's pictures, told her, with a twinkle in his eye, to give the invalid hot bread and milk and keep him between two blankets for twenty-four hours, and finally departed, still wearing Charles's incongruous garments, in a hastily summoned taxi.

"And that's that," said Marigold, ruefully.

But it wasn't.

Arrived safely at his hotel, which he discreetly entered by the back way, Hubert Brigadayne hurriedly divested himself of his unfamiliar clothing, put on a flowered-silk dressing gown, and devoted energetic attention to the telephone receiver in his bedroom. He put down the receiver with a chuckle.

"I'm sorry, Maisie," he said enigmatically, to no one in particular, "but I guess it's got to be done."

THE following morning the fun began. When she first saw the headlines Marigold whooped with joy. Then for a moment she thought it was a huge practical joke. Even Charles, looking over Marigold's shoulder, dropped his pipe in astonishment.

In large black type these were the headlines that met their astounded eyes:—

FAMOUS FILM STAR RESCUES YOUNG ARTIST.

HUBERT BRIGADAYNE IN ENGLAND.

SENSATIONAL DIVE INTO THAMES.

Beneath, punctuating a long column of type, appeared photographs of Hubert Brigadayne—and Charles!

"Well, I'm——" began Charles.

"That photograph!" cried Marigold in the same instant. "He must have taken it while I got the taxi."

But the real surprise was yet to come. They read eagerly what the newspaper had to say about it all. After a graphic description of the rescue and a brief reference to Hubert Brigadayne's famous career, there followed an interview with Hubert Brigadayne at his hotel:—

". . . . but the distinguished film actor refused to talk about himself.

"'I have always been keenly interested in art,' he declared. 'This young artist is a discovery, and I claim the credit for it. I have already bought three of his pictures and am confident that true connoisseurs of art will follow suit. In fact, I am so impressed by his work that I am losing no time in arranging for an exhibition of his pictures, which will be held in the very near future.'"

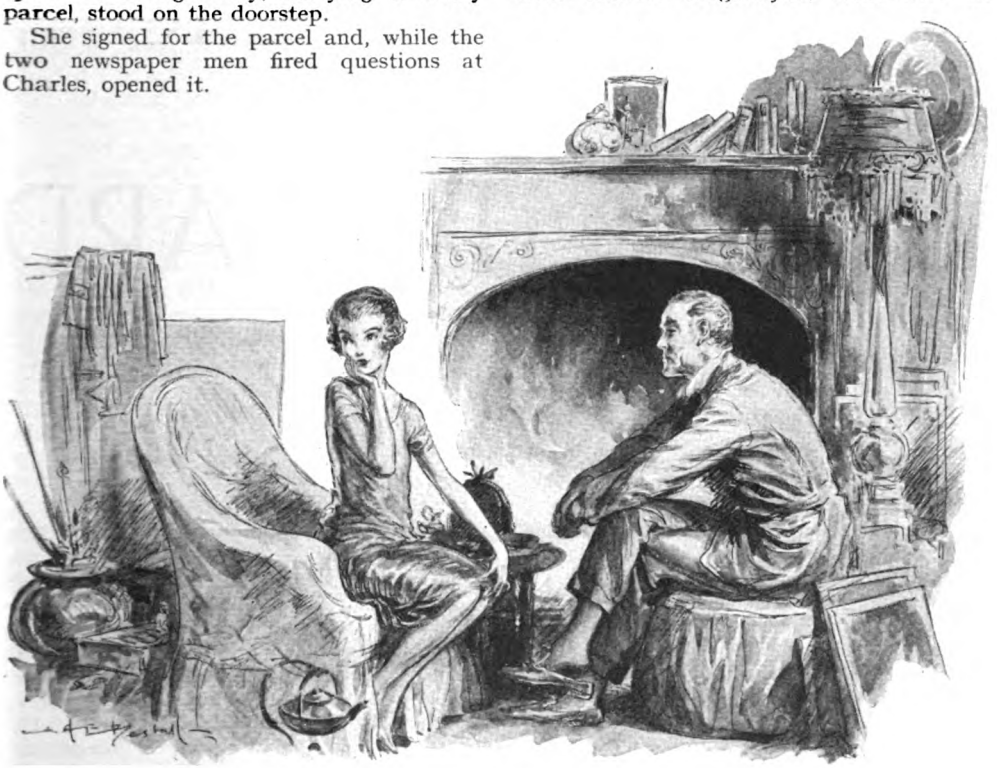
"Holy smoke!" said Charles, eloquently.

The newspaper slid from Marigold's fingers. She felt that she wanted to put her head on Charles's shoulder and laugh and cry together.

A sudden ring at the studio bell brought them sharply back to earth.

Marigold opened the door. Two men ("I *knew* they were reporters!" declared Marigold, triumphantly, afterwards) and a special messenger boy, carrying a bulky parcel, stood on the doorstep.

She signed for the parcel and, while the two newspaper men fired questions at Charles, opened it.



"Why did your husband fall in the river?"
Marigold hesitated—and was lost.

It contained Charles's trousers and tweed jacket, and a letter. Marigold slit it open, and a cheque fell out.

"I hope you will forgive me," she read, "but I really do admire your husband's work, and these are the three pictures I want, to begin with . . ."

There was only one sentence Marigold couldn't understand. In fact, neither she nor Charles—who is now so prosperous that Marigold is always scolding him about his pipe—has ever been able to understand it. This was the sentence: "It's an ill wind that blows no one any good."

But I think you ought to know what Hubert Brigadayne meant.

BEFORE sending his Thames-soaked suit to be cleaned—for Hubert Brigadayne, unlike some film stars, was a sensible fellow—he turned out the pockets. From one of them he drew a letter, addressed to Mrs. Hubert Brigadayne, somewhere in California, sealed and stamped, and ready to be posted.

But alas! The muddy Thames had done its work.

He opened it slowly and re-read what he had written the morning before. Most of it concerns nobody but Mrs. and Mr. Hubert Brigadayne, but on the third page he had written:—

> ". . . and not a soul knows I am in London. I can't tell you how delightful it is to be for once out of the limelight you know I detest so much. It's a real holiday, no interviews, no publicity . . ."

"The joke's on me," he murmured, as he tore up the letter and threw it into the fire.

"Days of My Life"

By H. RIDER HAGGARD

XII.—EGYPT AGAIN.

A chapter of accidents—A visit to the tomb of Queen Nefer-tari—
Should the desecration of the dead be permitted?

EARLY in 1904 I took my daughter Angela on a trip to Egypt, returning by way of Italy and Spain. We went out on one of the new P. and O. boats which was making her maiden voyage, and experienced the most awful weather. We began by grounding in the Thames, and after a short stop to bury a Lascar overboard, who, poor fellow, had died of the cold, ran into a terrific gale in the Channel. The wind-gauges registered its pace at about eighty miles the hour, after which their bottoms were blown out or something happened to them. Then the fore-hatch was stove in and filled with water, as did the passages along which we had to walk from the cabins. Time after time did we stop to try and make that hatch good with four-inch teak planks, but always these were broken by the force of the sea.

Our subsequent misfortunes were many. We were taken in closer to Ushant than I thought pleasant; the new engines heated; the chief engineer went mad with the strain and, when at length we did reach Port Said, had to be carried ashore raving. I believe that he died not long afterwards. One night this poor fellow, dressed in full uniform, rushed from cabin to cabin, telling the passengers to get up as the ship was sinking!

We took the turn into the Mediterranean about twenty-four hours late, and in the dense darkness caused by a fearful squall nearly went ashore on the coast of Africa, as the *Delhi* did in after years—I saw her wreck only the other day. When the light came I had a nearer view of that shore than I ever wish to see again—from the deck of an ocean liner. In Gibraltar harbour we fouled our anchor in a man-of-war's mooring chains and had to slip it. In the Gulf of Lyons we encountered a very bad mistral while we were trying to sling another anchor into its place. There it hung over the bow, bumping against the side of the ship. By this time the Lascars seemed to be practically useless, and the First Officer was obliged to slide down the chain and sit on the fluke of the anchor, shouting directions. It was a strange sight to see this plucky young gentleman swinging about there over the deep. He was, and I trust still is, a man of whom the country might be proud, but I have long forgotten his name. In the end we crawled at three knots the hour into Marseilles, where some of the passengers left the ship, one of them explaining, for the comfort of the rest of us, that he had the strongest of presentiments that she was going to sink.

Our next adventure was a sandstorm blowing from the coast of Africa, which turned the day to darkness and covered the decks with a kind of mud. Then suddenly the vessel was put about, and it was discovered that the soundings showed that we were uncomfortably near the coast of Crete.

However, we came to Port Said at length and got ashore at about midnight as best we could. Never was I more glad to find myself on land again.

I enjoyed that trip in Egypt very much

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The place has a strange fascination for me, and if I could afford it I would go there every year. On this my second visit we went as far as the wonderful rock-temple of Abu Simbel, near the Second Cataract of the Nile. Also I had the good fortune to be with Mr. Carter, then the local custodian of antiquities at Luxor; when we visited the tomb of Queen Nefer-tari, with the exception of the discoverer, we were, I believe, the first white men to enter.

It was wonderful to see those paintings of her late Majesty as fresh as the day that the artist left them. In one of them, I remember, she is represented playing chess. The tomb had been robbed a couple of thousand years or so ago. When the ancient thief broke in it had recently been flooded by a rain-storm, and there on the walls were the marks of his hand printed on the paint, which then was wet. Also a hermit bee had built its nest upon the roof—two thousand or so of years ago! The sarcophagus had been broken up for its costly granite, which doubtless was worked into statues by some old-world sculptor, and the body of the beautiful favourite queen of Rameses destroyed. Some bones lay about in the tomb-chamber, probably those of the funeral offerings, and among them *ushapti* figures, laid there to serve her Majesty in the other world.

I wrote a series of articles about these Egyptian experiences, which have never been republished, for such newspaper matter must needs be very scrappy. In one of these, however, I dwelt upon the subject of the wholesale robbery of the ancient Egyptian tombs and the consequent desecration of the dead who lie therein. It does, indeed, seem wrong that people with whom it was the first article of religion that their mortal remains should lie undisturbed until the Day of Resurrection should be haled forth, stripped and broken up, or sold to museums and tourists. How should we like our own bodies to be treated in such a fashion, or to be left lying, as I have often seen those of the Egyptians, naked and unsightly on the sand at the mouths of the holy sepulchres which, with toil and cost, they had prepared for themselves in their life-days? If one puts the question to those engaged in excavation, the answer is a shrug of the shoulders and a remark to the effect that they died a long while ago. But what is time to the dead? To them, waking or sleeping, ten thousand years and a nap after dinner must be one and the same thing. I tried to emphasize this point in a little story that I wrote under the title of "Smith and the Pharaohs." *

Now I must dwell no more on Egypt, with all its history and problems, which, whenever I can find time, it is my greatest recreation to study. Truly its old inhabitants were a mysterious and fascinating folk, and across the gulf of ages, largely it must be admitted through these very excavations, they have come very near to us again. I confess I know more of her kings, her queens, and her social conditions than I do of those of early England.

On my return I wrote "The Way of the Spirit," an Anglo-Egyptian book which is dedicated to Kipling and one that interested him very much. Indeed, he and I hunted out the title together in the Bible, as that of "Renunciation," by which it was first called, did not please him. Or perhaps this had been used before. I was glad to receive many letters from strangers thanking me for it.

* This story appeared in THE STRAND MAGAZINE in January and February, 1913.

XIII.—PSYCHICAL.

A vivid dream and the extraordinary events that followed—The question of telepathic communications—A letter from Sir Oliver Lodge.

IN July, 1904, there happened to me a very extraordinary incident. The story is contained in a letter from me which appeared in *The Times* for July 21st, 1904, together with letters from various other persons testifying to the facts of the case. These letters and other matter were included in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research for October, 1904, from which I make short extracts relating the facts. Should anyone wish to study it in detail with the corroborating letters they are referred to that number of the Society's Journal.

"On the night of Saturday, July 9th, I went to bed about twelve-thirty, and suffered from what I took to be a nightmare. I was awakened by my wife's voice calling to me from her own bed upon the other side of the room. I dreamed that a black retriever dog, a most amiable and intelligent beast named Bob, which was the property of my eldest daughter, was lying on its side among brushwood, or rough growth of some sort, by water. In my vision the dog was trying to speak to me in words, and, failing, transmitted to my mind in an undefined fashion the

knowledge that it was dying. Then everything vanished, and I woke to hear my wife asking me why on earth I was making those horrible and weird noises. I replied that I had had a nightmare about a fearful struggle, and that I had dreamed that old Bob was in a dreadful way, and was trying to talk to me and to tell me about it.

"On the Sunday morning Mrs. Rider Haggard told the tale at breakfast, and I repeated my story in a few words.

"Thinking that the whole thing was nothing more than a disagreeable dream, I made no inquiries about the dog

My servant, Charles Bedingfield, and I discovered the body of the dog floating in the Waveney.

and never learned even that it was missing until that Sunday night, when my little girl, who was in the habit of feeding it, told me so. At breakfast time, I may add, nobody knew that it was gone, as it had been seen late on the previous evening. Then I remembered my dream, and the following day inquiries were set on foot.

"To be brief, on the morning of Thursday, the 14th, my servant, Charles Bedingfield, and I discovered the body of the dog floating in the Waveney against a weir about a mile and a quarter away.

"On Friday, the 15th, I was going into Bungay when at the level crossing on the Bungay road I was hailed by two platelayers, who are named respectively George Arterton and Harry Alger. These men informed me that the dog had been killed by a train, and took me on a trolly down to a certain open-work bridge which crosses the water between Ditchingham and Bungay, where they showed me evidence of its death. This is the sum of their evidence :—

"It appears that about seven o'clock upon the Monday morning, very shortly after the first train had passed, in the course of his duties Harry Alger was on the bridge, where he found a dog's collar torn off and broken by the engine (since produced and positively identified as that worn by Bob), coagulated blood, and bits of flesh, of which remnants he cleaned the rails. On search also I personally found portions of black hair from the coat of a dog. On the Monday afternoon and subsequently his mate saw the body of the dog floating in the water beneath the bridge, whence it drifted down to the weir, it having risen with the natural expansion of gases, such as, in this hot

weather, might be expected to occur within about forty hours of death. It would seem that the animal must have been killed by an excursion train that left Ditchingham at ten-twenty-five on Saturday night, returning empty from Harleston a little after eleven. This was the last train which ran that night. No trains run on Sunday, and it is practically certain that it cannot have been killed on the Monday morning, for then the blood would have been still fluid. Further, if it was living, the dog would almost certainly have come home during Sunday, and its body would not have risen so quickly from the bottom of the river, or presented the appearance it did on Thursday morning. From traces left upon the piers of the bridge it appears that the animal was knocked or carried along some yards by the train and fell into the brink of the water where reeds grow. Here, if it were still living—and, although the veterinary thinks that death was practically instantaneous, its life may perhaps have lingered for a few minutes—it must have suffocated and sunk, undergoing, I imagine, much the same sensations as I did in my dream, and in very similar surroundings to those that I saw therein—namely, amongst a scrubby growth at the edge of water.

"I am forced to conclude that the dog Bob, between whom and myself there existed a mutual attachment, either at the moment of his death, if his existence can conceivably have been prolonged till after one in the morning, or, as seems more probable, about three hours after that event, did succeed in calling my attention to its actual or recent plight by placing whatever portion of my being is capable of receiving such impulses when enchained by sleep into its own terrible position.

"On the remarkable issues opened up by this occurrence I cannot venture to speak further than to say that—although it is dangerous to generalize from a particular instance, however striking and well supported by evidence, which is so rarely obtainable in such obscure cases—it does seem to suggest that there is a more intimate ghostly connection between all members of the animal world, including man, than has hitherto been believed, at any rate by Western peoples; that they may be, in short, all of them different manifestations of some central, informing life, though inhabiting the universe in such various shapes. The matter, however, is one for the consideration of learned people who have made a study of these mysterious questions. I will only add that I ask you to publish the annexed documents with this letter, as they constitute the written testimony at present available in the accuracy of what I state. Further, I may say that I shall welcome any investigation by competent persons.

"I am, your obedient servant,
"H. Rider Haggard.

"To the Editor of *The Times*."

The Editor of the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research says:—

"This case is one of very unusual interest from several points of view. It is, therefore, specially satisfactory to have it so well authenticated, and Mr. Rider Haggard deserves the gratitude of psychical researchers for having collected all the available evidence so promptly and completely, and put it at the disposal of the scientific world"

THIS experience produced a great effect upon me and at first frightened and upset me somewhat, for without doubt it has a very uncanny side. By degrees, however, I came to see that it also has its lessons, notably one lesson, that of the kinship, I might almost say the oneness, of all animal life. I have always been fond of every kind of creature, and especially of dogs, some of which have been and are as very dear friends to me. But up to this date I had also been a sportsman. Shooting was my principal recreation and one of which I was, and indeed still am, extremely fond. Greatly did I love a high pheasant, at which sometimes I made good marksmanship. But now, alas! I only bring them down in imagination with an umbrella or a walking-stick. From that day forward, except noxious insects and so forth, I have killed nothing, and, although I should not hesitate to shoot again for food or for protection, I am by no means certain that the act would not make me feel unwell. Perhaps illogically, I make an exception in favour of fishing, and I dare say that if salmon came my way I might once more throw a fly for them. I do not think that fish feel much.

Again, harmful creatures must be destroyed, since man must live, and so must those that are necessary to his physical sustenance, such as sheep and cattle—that is, until he becomes a vegetarian, as perhaps he will one day—a long while hence.

The publication of this "Bob" correspondence in *The Times* brought me many letters of which the general tenor went to prove that similar examples of such psychical or telepathic communications were by no means unknown, though none of these were quite so clear as that which

I have set out above. Nor were they so well supported by evidence. Moreover, it seemed almost certain that the dog Bob communicated with me *after* its death, which, if it could be absolutely and finally proved, as it cannot, would solve one of the mysteries of our being, by showing that the spirit even of a dog can live on when its mortal frame is destroyed and physical death has happened. If a dog—then how much more a man!

None of the experiences of my correspondents went so far as this. A number of these letters I sent to the Psychical Research Society, but a great bundle of them still remains which I have not the time to re-read. On this point of the continuance of individual existence after physical death I once wrote a letter to Sir Oliver Lodge. I asked him whether he possessed such evidence as would satisfy a reasonable person, say a judge or a juryman, of the fact of the continued existence of the individual after his physical death. He answered :—

"As to your question—it is not an easy one. By scientific experience I have myself become absolutely convinced of persistence of existence, and I regard death as an important episode—the reverse of birth; but neither of these episodes really initial or final. One is the assumption of connection with matter; the other is the abandoning of that connection.

"If it be further asked whether after we have abandoned matter we can, by indirect means, occasionally continue to act upon it—on the matter of the inorganic world or the matter of our friends' brains, for instance—I am inclined to answer, though now more doubtfully, that in my judgment the evidence points to the existence of some indistinct and undeveloped power of this sort.

"The simplest and best-developed variety of this continued inter-action with matter is on the side of telepathy.

"This is experimentally found existent between the living, and I have reason to believe that this is the one mode of communication which survives the transition, and that under favourable conditions we can still influence and be influenced by the process of events and emotions here . . . ."

This is comforting so far as it goes, and of course extremely interesting. But after all we have here only the experience and the deductions of one man, who, brilliant and utterly upright as he is known to be, may still be mistaken like the rest of us. The manifestations exist—many can bear witness to them. But whence do they come? That is the question. May not some Power be mocking us that directly or indirectly draws its strength from our own vital forces and has its roots in our own intelligence, exalted in an access of spiritual intoxication? Yet if so, this does not explain the "Bob" incident, when I was seeking for nothing and had gone to sleep tired out with my usual day's work. Why in such circumstances should this dog have materialized itself in my slumbering brain and at the moment of its death, or rather, as I firmly believe, several hours after that event? Therein lies a hint of great marvels.

XIV.—CONCLUSION.

A visit to Ireland—King Edward's last illness—Stories of General Booth—My knighthood—Invitation to join Royal Commission to visit the Dominions—"I have spoken!"

As a member of the Royal Commission on Coast Erosion and Afforestation I paid a visit to Ireland. It was a very interesting experience because of the number and different classes of people with whom we came in contact as we journeyed from place to place in motor-cars.

I found the Irish the most charming and attractive people that I have ever met, and the most incomprehensible. What rather disgusted me, however, was the mendicant attitude of mind which again and again I observed among those who gave evidence before us. They all wanted something out of the Government, and generally something for nothing. I remember growing enraged with one witness, a most shameless beggar, and saying to him :—

"The fact is, sir, that after the British Government has given you the horse, you expect that they should feed it also."

"Shure, your Honour!" he answered, quite unperturbed, or words to that effect.

As I was dressing one morning at a Cork hotel, I received a telegram informing me that King Edward had died during the night. We did not leave Cork till ten or eleven o'clock, but up to that hour, although the

"The fact is, sir, that after the British Government has given you the horse, you expect that they should feed it also."
"Shure, your Honour!" he answered, quite unperturbed.

news was well known, I saw no indication of public mourning. No bells were rung and no flags flew at half-mast. This may have been mere carelessness, or it may have been—something else. That day, when stopping under a tree to shelter from a heavy shower, I fell into conversation with an Irish farmer of the humorous type, and told him the sad intelligence. He reflected for a moment, then said :—

"Is that so, your Honour? Well, he's gone! Let's thank God and the saints *it isn't us!*"

On the other hand, the same tidings moved an old woman in a wretched shanty in Connemara literally to tears.

"And it's dead he is," she said to me. "Shure he was a grand man! Never a week but he sent me five shillings with his own name to it."

Further queries elicited the fact that this old lady believed that his late Majesty personally posted to her five shillings each Monday morning, which she drew at the post-office in the shape of an Old-Age Pension! Hence her loyal soul.

On my return to London I saw King Edward's body lying in state in Westminster

Hall, and afterwards watched the noble panorama of his funeral from the upper balcony of the Athenæum. Thomas Hardy and I sat together; there were, I remember, but few in the club.

The great military pageant of the passing of the mortal remains of King Edward brought back to my mind that of the burial of Queen Victoria. This I saw from the house of one of the minor Canons, which was exactly opposite to the steps of the Chapel at Windsor. The sight of the gorgeous procession passing up those steps impressed itself very deeply on me. The bearers staggering under the weight of the massive leaden coffin that yet seemed so short, till once or twice I thought that they must fall; the cloaked King Edward walking immediately behind, followed by a galaxy of princes; the officer or aide-de-camp who came to him saluting to make some report or ask some order and received a nod in answer; the troops with arms reversed, the boom of the solemn guns, the silent, watching multitude, the bright sun gilding the wintry scene, the wind that tossed the plumes and draperies—all these and more made a picture never to be forgotten. And now after a few brief years the mourning Monarch who formed its central, living figure passed by in another coffin, himself the mourned!

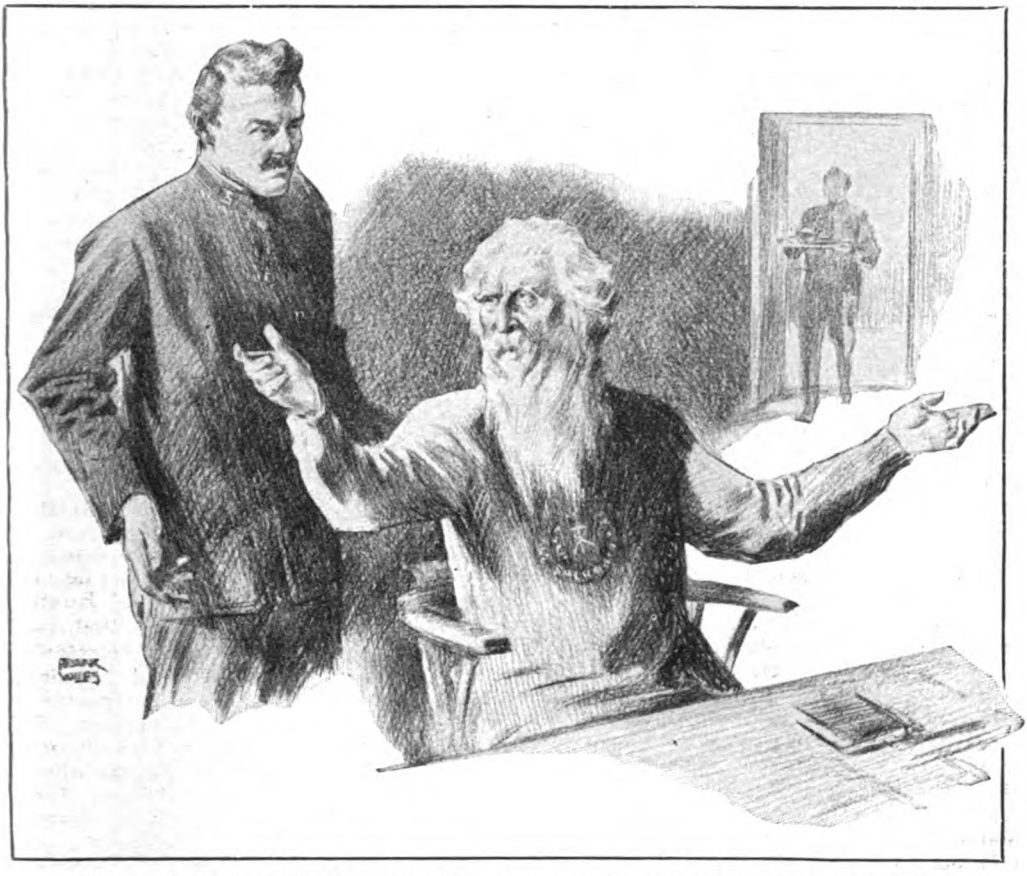
A few days after the funeral I met at dinner one of the physicians who attended the late King during his last illness. He told me that he did not think that His Majesty knew he was dying and that no one informed him. He thought that the King believed that he would pull through, as he had often done before. When it was suggested to him that he had better not see people, he answered it "amuses me" and that he did not want any "fuss." This doctor was of opinion that there was nothing in the story that the King had worried himself over the political situation, as he was "not that sort of man." He died because his heart was worn out, for he had "warmed both hands at the fire of life." He did not seem to be spiritually troubled in any way, though he kept "all the forms." He added that on the day he died the King smoked a cigar.

WHILST I was still engaged upon this Commission I undertook another piece of work. One day General Booth sent an officer to me to ask if I would write a report upon the social efforts and institutions of the Salvation Army, for which it would be prepared to pay a fee to be arranged. I answered that I had no time, and that in any case I would not touch their money. Ultimately, however, I made the time and undertook the task as a labour of love on the condition that they should pay the out-of-pocket expenses. It took me about three months in all, including the travelling to various cities in England and Scotland, and as a result I published my book "Regeneration," the copyright of which I made the Army a present. I do not suppose that this has proved a valuable gift, as to find a large sale such books must be of the ultra-sensational order, which mine was not.

I saw much of human misery in the course of that business, and emerged from it with a most whole-hearted admiration for the Salvation Army and its splendid, self-sacrificing labours among the lowest of the low. Its success with these, where so many have failed, remains something of a mystery to my mind which I can only explain by a belief that it is aided through the agency of the Power above us. Nothing else will account for the transformations it effects in the natures of utterly degraded men and women. Long may it endure and prosper!

I have known General Booth for many years; my first interview with him, one of great interest, is printed verbatim in "Rural England." We were always the best of friends, perhaps because I was never afraid of him, as seemed to be the case with so many of those by whom he was surrounded, and was always ready to give him a Roland for his Oliver in the way of what is known as chaff. I have seen him under sundry conditions, of which perhaps the funniest was the following. One day, after he had been holding a great meeting for City men in London, at which I was present, I took a gentleman to visit him who I thought might be able to help his cause. We found him at his office in Queen Victoria Street, stripped to his red Salvation jersey, streaming with perspiration and very cross because his tea, or whatever the meal was called, was not ready. He was calling out, officers were flying here and there, someone was trying to soothe him, and so on. At length the meal arrived, consisting of a huge dish of mushrooms and a pot of strong tea. Contemplating this combination of fungi and tannin, I remarked that never before had I understood the height and depth and breadth of his faith in the heavenly protection.

This reminds me of a story which Captain Wright, a member of the Salvation Army who acted as one of my secretaries in America, told me of the General's peculiar diet. Wright was travelling with him when he was tearing round the States preaching in the great cities. At that time his fancy was to eat two boiled Spanish onions before he went to rest, and it was Wright's business to see that those onions were there. One unlucky night, however, after a particularly



We found General Booth at his office, very cross because his tea was not ready.

exhausting meeting, they arrived at the hotel, where all the attendants had gone to bed, to find two very massive onions reposing on the plate as usual, but just as they had left, not the saucepan, but their mother earth !

Of the row that ensued the Captain spoke to me in the hushed voice of awe.*

The old General wrote as follows about my book " Regeneration." The letter is a very good specimen of his fine, bold handwriting, although at that time his sight was already feeble.

" International Headquarters,
London, E.C.
Dec. 10, 1910.

" My dear Rider Haggard,

" I have just read ' Regeneration.' It is admirable. You have not only seen into the character and purpose of the work we are trying to do, with the insight of a true genius, but with the sympathy of a big and generous soul. From my heart I thank you.

" May the blessing of the living God rest upon you, and on Mrs. Haggard and on your daughters, both for this life and the life to come.

" Believe me,
" Yours very sincerely,
" William Booth.

" Rider Haggard, Esq., J.P."

On May 20th, 1912, the General wrote to me, saying that he was to undergo at once an operation for cataract on his remaining eye, one being already blind.

The signature to this touching letter, written just before his last illness, for death followed on the heels of that operation, is somewhat irregular, for then he was practically blind, but still written in the old

* General Booth said to me more than once : " Ah ! But you would look *grand* in my uniform," whereto I would reply quite truly that I was not fit to wear that wedding garment, or words to that effect.—H. R. H.

firm hand. Three months later to the day he died, and I received the following telegram dated August 21st:—

"With deepest sorrow I have to announce The General laid down his sword at ten-fifteen last night. Pray for us.

"BRAMWELL BOOTH."

So William Booth passed away. If there is any reward elsewhere for the deeds of good men, his should be great. Here on earth he has built himself a monument of thousands of regenerated hearts. Why, I wonder, was burial in Westminster Abbey not offered for his remains? I suppose the answer is—because he did not belong to the Church of England. Yet if the Abbey can open its ancient doors to those who amused many of the people, eminent actors for instance, it seems hard that these should be closed to one who saved so many of the people and in all lands.

I MISSED the Coast Erosion Commission very much, since its sittings took me to London from time to time and gave me a change of mental occupation and interests. Indeed I do not remember ever being more consistently depressed than I was during the first part of the following winter. Here, as I no longer shoot, I had nothing to do, except the daily grind of romance-writing, relieved only by Bench business, my farm affairs, and an afternoon walk through the mud with the two spaniels, Bustle and Jeekie, and a chat after church on Sunday upon the affairs of the nation with my fellow-churchwarden, friend, and neighbour, Mr. Carr, the squire of this place. Also bronchitis, which had threatened me for some years, troubled me much. I thought that I had shaken it off, but caught it again during a cold snap, staying at a Cambridge college, whither I went to address a large meeting upon the possibility of establishing agricultural training institutions upon the Danish model. So I returned here, enjoyed the bronchitis, and began to write this autobiography, for really it seemed as though everything had come to an end.

Then of a sudden things changed, as they have a way of doing in life. Thus one morning about Christmas-time I found amongst my correspondence a communication from the Prime Minister informing me that the King had been pleased to confer a knighthood upon me. I had often thought and said that I did not think I should care to be knighted. Indeed, when a year or two before it was suggested to me through a semi-official channel on behalf of a very powerful Minister that if I wished for a baronetcy it might perhaps be arranged, I said at once and firmly that I did not. Baronetcies are for rich men who have male heirs, not for persons like myself.

However, I took the knighthood when it was definitely offered, on the ground that it is a mistake to refuse anything in this world, also that a title is useful in the Public Service, and especially so abroad. Moreover, it was recognition, for which I felt grateful, for who is there that does not appreciate recognition, particularly after long years of, I hope, disinterested toil?

A WEEK or so after the announcement of my honour, on January 11th, 1912, the post brought me another interesting and more important letter, from which I will quote one or two passages.

"January 10, 1912.

"Colonial Office.

"DEAR MR. HAGGARD,

"You are probably aware that at the Imperial Conference of last year it was decided to appoint a Royal Commission to visit the various Dominions and report upon them. I enclose a copy of the Resolution of the Conference and another of the suggested Terms of Reference. You will notice that the Fiscal Question is carefully excluded from the purview of the Commission. The inquiry will probably extend over three years, though it will not occupy anything like the whole of that time, and it will entail three visits to the Dominions—one of three months to Canada and Newfoundland, another of three months to South Africa, and another of six months to Australia and New Zealand. These visits will take place in different years and will not be continuous. Of course, following the precedent of all other Royal Commissions, there will be no remuneration for the Commissioners" (then follow details as to travelling allowance, etc.). "There is to be one Commissioner for each of the five Dominions and six British Commissioners. Lord Inchcape is to be the Chairman, and the Prime Minister and I are very anxious to try to induce you to be one of the British Commissioners. . . .

"Yours very truly,

"L. HARCOURT."

In a subsequent letter Mr. Harcourt wrote:—

"I greatly hope that you will be able to accept, and I trust for the sake of the reading public that the Commission will not prevent you from pursuing a good deal of your usual avocations and might even incidentally provide materials!"

I need scarcely say that to my mind this was recognition—with a vengeance. Charles

Sir H. Rider Haggard with his eldest daughter, one of his grandsons, and his pet spaniel.

Longman remarked when I told him the news, at which he was delighted, " I would rather have heard this than that they had given you a peerage. Anyone can be a peer, but to be one of the six men chosen to represent the United Kingdom on a great Empire inquiry of this sort is a real honour."

I agree with him, especially as I have no wish to be a peer. Also to me the compliment seemed the more marked for the reason that it was paid to an individual who first became known to the public as a writer of romantic literature, an occupation that does not dispose the British nation to take those who follow it seriously. Now I saw that all my long years of toil in investigating and attempting to solve the grave problems which lie at the root of the welfare of our country had not been without effect upon the minds of its rulers, and I felt proportionately grateful and honoured.

Of course, the acceptance of this Royal Commissionership involves serious sacrifices in my case, exclusive of that of long separation from my family. Thus it will necessitate the partial shutting down of my home here, and how I am to carry on my literary work in the intervals of so much public labour, really I do not know. Still, I felt, as did my wife, and feel that such considerations

should not be allowed to interfere with the execution of what I look upon as a high and honourable duty.

In the beginning of the present year (1912) I paid another visit to Egypt in the hope of shaking off my bronchitis, which I did—until I got back to England, a country in which I am rather doubtful whether I shall ever be able to winter again. On this occasion my daughter Angela and I examined the mummy of the Pharaoh Menetah, which Sir Gaston Maspero kindly caused to be removed to a private room for our inspection. It was a strange thing to look upon the tall form and the withered countenance of the man who is generally believed to have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus, that Majesty before whom, perhaps, Moses stood, and to think that that frozen countenance (it is a very impressive countenance still) may have trembled and sunk in at the announcement of the judgments of the great God of the Israelites.

On my return to England I set to work to write a romance in the new Allan Quatermain series. The first of these books, "Marie," has, I am glad to say, been much liked by its readers, and up to the present proved successful. Of course, however, when I speak of success, I mean on the moderate scale to which I can hope to attain.

No doubt, however, by degrees as a writer I shall be put upon the shelf, for that is the lot of all, or nearly all, of us when we grow old. I cannot look forward to any prosperous period in my old age, which, should I chance to live so long, it seems to me probable enough I shall be called upon to pass in a very modest way. As, however, I have been able to provide well for any who may come after me, at this I do not grumble in the least. I have earned a good average income as an author during many years, and perhaps I ought to have saved more. But investments are apt to turn out badly when the investor has no time to attend to them; moreover, as I think I said I have discovered, it is certainly true that man does not "live to himself alone." There are plenty of those who claim to share in whatever he may earn. The owner of any fixed property in our part of rural England is, in fact, nothing but a distributor. In wages, taxes, and subscriptions he hands out nearly all that he receives; except of course the worries, the losses, the clamorous and almost savage demands for money that come by every post, and the various official forms that he is required to fill in. These too often are all his portion, and therefore it is that I have determined to sell every acre of our outlying lands if they will reach to a very moderate reserve figure on the open market.

AND now "I have spoken!" as the Zulus say. I fear that what I have said is somewhat egotistical in tone, but how can that be helped? An autobiography which did not treat at length of the person concerned would be but an apple dumpling without the apple.

There is much more that I might have said. For instance, I, who am now preparing to start upon a great journey to the Antipodes, have found neither the time nor the courage even to look through my letters received during the last ten or twelve years. I have dealt simply with those salient points that occurred to me and hunted, not always with success, for such documents as might bear upon them. Thus, a very amusing and perhaps an interesting chapter might be composed out of the correspondence which I have received from writers who are personally unknown to me. Should I live and find time, strength, and opportunity, I may add further chapters to this record descriptive of my impressions of the British Empire, the greater portion of which I am about to visit. But who knows the Future and its gifts?

So ends the chronicle of Henry Rider Haggard—a lover of the kindly race of men, a lover of children, a lover of his friends (and no hater of his enemies), a lover of flowers, a lover of the land and of all creatures that dwell thereon, but most of all, perhaps, a lover of his country, which with heart and soul and strength he has tried to serve to the best of his small powers and opportunities. May every blessing be on her—every success to her arms by land and sea and every splendour on her ancient name during the troublous times that are to come: yes, and all confusion to any of her sons who, for selfish ends, would drag her down to wreck! Such is his earnest prayer!

Thus, then, poor sinner though I am, trustfully as a wearied child that, at the coming of the night, creeps to its mother's knee, do I commit my spirit to the comfort of those Everlasting Arms that were and are its support through all the fears of earth, and, as I believe, have nursed it from of old.

One boon from infancy to age has been showered upon me in a strange abundance, pressed down and running over: the uncountable peculiar treasure of every degree and form of human love, which love alone, present or departed, has made my life worth living.

But if it is all to cease and be forgotten at the borders of the grave, then life is *not* worth living. Such, however, is no faith of mine.

Farewell!

The Waiter at the Planet

By

J. J. BELL

Illustrated by
FRED W. PURVIS

THE host had been entertaining, the man on her left adoring, her cousin Maggie more or less amusing; and it was not till dinner was over that Elfrida's grey eyes chanced to encounter the face of the man who had waited on the little party.

Elfrida caught her breath, little lamps of amazement shone in her grey eyes, and a rose was born on her fair face. Next moment the lamps were out, the rose gone, and her gaze was on the cloth while she listened, or appeared to listen, to a remark of her lover's. As for the waiter, a tall, dark young man, far from ill-looking, his only emotion, if such it might be termed, was betrayed by a sudden firming of the lips; but, then, it was not his first time of noticing the girl.

"Well," said the host, snapping shut his watch, "what about it? It's one of those mystery plays, and——"

Seven minutes later they took their seats in a box at the Imperial. Had you looked in then you would probably have noted that cousin Maggie, a girl of more weight than is fashionable to-day, but of considerable personal attraction, manœuvred to leave all space available between the two pairs of chairs, and you might have suspected a desire to keep her host, a hearty bachelor of forty-two, as much to herself as possible. As a matter of fact, Maggie's motive was disinterested. She had got it into that small, clever head of hers, under its corn-yellow waves, that Alan Masters was on the verge of proposing to her cousin—and high time, too!—and that Elfrida was ready to answer "yes." Judging from the young man's behaviour during dinner, Maggie was satisfied that no mystery play, however intense, would distract his interest from lovely Elfrida.

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Well, Maggie's assumption was to be justified up to a point. In the course of the first interval, by cautious questioning, she gathered that Alan's mind was almost a blank as to the happenings in the first act, while Elfrida had not even guessed at a possible arch-villain. Wherefore, when the curtain fell on the second act, she whispered to her host a wish for a turn outside, to which he willingly acceded, and stepped from the box in a state of bubbling anticipation, which found vent in the words, "Oh, George, I feel sure something thrilling is going to happen!" To which her old friend George replied: "I'll bet you it was the parson who committed the murder."

And something did happen, as Maggie perceived on re-entering the box. But she perceived also that it had been nothing of a joyous nature. Alan was undisguisedly glum, and Elfrida's smile had trouble behind. Still, the third act was what George called "a corker," and it was only when the last curtain had fallen that Maggie began to realize how her foresight had been at fault, at least with regard to her cousin.

Elfrida complained of a headache, begged to be excused from the supper dance planned by the host, and expressed a wish to be sent home alone in a taxi. Maggie, her cousin's guest for the night, insisted on going with her, and after some mild wrangling, and in spite of George's efforts to effect a compromise—he proposed that they should run Elfrida down to Kensington and come back to supper—she carried her point. The drive was a silent one. Elfrida seemed to have nothing to say, and Maggie, though sorely puzzled, forbore for once to ask questions.

"Thank goodness, mother has gone early to bed. Evidently no bridge to-night," Elfrida remarked as they entered the hall of a handsome house, with a quiet evidence of luxury. "Come to my room, Maggie. I've got something to say to you."

IN the boudoir a fire was burning, though the September night was mild.

"Sit down. Smoke, if you want to," said Elfrida, throwing aside her cloak. She dropped into an easy-chair, stared at the fire for a minute or two, then faced her cousin. "I know you have been expecting it," she began abruptly, "and so I think I ought to tell you, once and for all, that to-night, while you were away from the box, Alan asked me to marry him, and—and I told him I couldn't."

"But why on earth did you tell him that?"

"Because it was the truth. I don't care for him—enough."

Maggie shrugged her plump white shoulders. "It's funny, but I thought you cared for him no end—and I'm sure he thought so too, poor boy!"

"Oh, no, Maggie!"

"But oh, yes, Elfrida! How could he think otherwise? He has been at your feet for the last two years, and you have never discouraged him."

"I've never *en*couraged him!"

"Can you say that? You have at least favoured him before all the others. Do be frank—it's so unlike you to be the other thing—and tell me just why you have turned down poor Alan."

"I—I don't know." Elfrida looked like tears.

"Oh, nonsense! Whatever has changed you, it must be something that happened very suddenly—very recently. When did it happen? I could have sworn you were in love with him when we were having those scrumptious ices——"

Elfrida's head went up. "I've never been in love with Alan," she said. "I'll admit I've been fond of him—I did like him better than the others—but now I think I must have fancied myself much fonder than I really was."

"Heigh-ho!" said Maggie, ironically.

"I can't explain it any other way," her cousin replied, drooping again.

"But if he had asked you earlier, say before the theatre, you would not have refused him—would you?"

"Perhaps not. How can I tell—now?"

"What happened to change your feelings towards him?"

"My feelings didn't change. I only discovered that they were not strong enough."

"H'm! And what," demanded persistent Maggie—"what led you to that astonishing discovery?"

"Why do you ask me that? Surely my own reason——"

"I'm sure it wasn't your own reason, which, normally, is quite sane. Something happened! What was it?"

Elfrida threw out her hands. "Maggie, I can't tell you."

"You won't?"

"I can't—because I'm not absolutely certain. I've got to think it out."

"I'd sleep it off if I were you. You've got what the Scotch call 'a bee in your bonnet.'" Maggie got up. "I can see you want to be alone," she said, kindly. "If you feel like telling me in the morning, good and well; if not, I'm still your friend. I want only to help, you know." She kissed her cousin and made for the door.

"You're a dear," said Elfrida. "Maggie!"

"Yes?" Maggie halted. "What is it, Frida?"

"Would you mind staying here another night, and dining with me at the—the same place? Just ourselves."

"At the Planet, you mean?"

Elfrida nodded.

"Why, that would be ripping—and, of course, I'll stay! But what's the idea?"

"Just a—a fancy."

Maggie's brows went up for an instant. "All right, dear; that's settled. Good night!" She stepped to the door.

"Maggie!"

"Yes?"

"I meant to ask you whether you noticed the waiter who served us to-night. A silly question at this moment, but it just came into my head. You noticed him?"

"Rather! A charming young man! But his face was quite familiar to me."

"What!" Elfrida started. "I heard you tell George that it was your first time at the Planet."

"So it was. But, for all that, the waiter's face was familiar."

"Don't tell me you—you've met him—somewhere——"

"Oh, get out! Still, it's rather interesting, and if I were a romantic maiden—but never mind that! You know Mrs. Brown's tea-room, up Shaftesbury way?"

Elfrida nodded.

"Mrs. Brown—not her real name—is an old friend of my people—but you know that, too?"

"Yes. *Please* go on!"

"Don't get excited. You know also that I come into town every week—sometimes twice—for my singing lesson."

"Yes, yes."

"Well, after my lesson I, as a rule, drop into Mrs. Brown's for a cup of tea. It's early in the afternoon—about three."

"And what then?"

"I never drop in without seeing the nice-looking waiter there—drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. Of course, he's a customer then, and doesn't look the least like a waiter. I suppose he has nothing to do in the early part of the afternoon and—well, that's all. I think you ought to go bye-bye at once, old thing. You're looking done up. Have you got some aspirins handy?"

"Oh, yes. He didn't seem to recognize you to-night—did he?"

"Why on earth should he, even if he had ever noticed me in Mrs. Brown's? Besides, a waiter may be a gentleman!"

"And a gentleman a waiter," murmured Elfrida.

"What did you say?" asked Maggie, from the door.

"Oh, nothing. I don't know what I'm saying." Elfrida yawned—artificially. "Good night, dear. I'll be all right in the morning."

Maggie's glance was curious, and she appeared about to speak, but after a moment, with a nod, she opened the door and went out.

Elfrida drew the easy-chair nearer to the hearth and lay back, gazing with half-veiled eyes at the ruddy fire. She was haunted by a memory of five years ago—a memory that went to a tune.

ABOUT eight o'clock on the following evening the head-waiter at the Planet ushered the cousins to a table and removed therefrom a card bearing the word "Reserved." The young waiter made them a grave inclination and proceeded with his duties.

"Why," exclaimed Maggie, "this is exactly where we were sitting last night!"

"Yes." Elfrida paused and, with something of an effort, added: "I rang up this afternoon to engage the same table."

"H'm!" said Maggie, non-committally. Her eyes moved from her cousin's face to that of the waiter, who was fetching something from a side-table.

"Maggie," whispered Elfrida, "please have patience with me. Talk about something that—that isn't in your mind, and keep on talking."

Maggie smiled. "An odd way to put it, but I'll do my best." And she did.

And somehow the dinner progressed to the coffee stage.

The orchestra had just finished a selection. The head-waiter was making one of his tours of the room. Elfrida signed to him, took a pencil from her bag, and wrote a line on the back of the menu-card.

"Would it be possible," she asked, with a delicious little smile, "to induce the band to play this—as an extra—now?"

The head-waiter read the pencilled words, "Serenade from 'Millions d'Arlequin.'"

"But certainly, madam!" he said. "It is an old favourite, though nobody has requested it for some little time."

"If there is any charge——" she began, diffidently.

His gesture was magnificent. "You shall have the Serenade in two minutes, madam, and I think you will say that our musicians play it well." With a bow he departed.

"That dear old sentimental thing!" said Maggie. "What made you think of it?"

Elfrida leaned forward. She was nervous and paler than usual. "Maggie, when the music starts, will you watch the waiter, please? I want to know whether it has any—any meaning for him. Don't look at me like that, dear! Afterwards I'll answer any questions you want to ask."

"Righto!" said Maggie, resignedly.

"Last night a mystery play; to-night a mystery dinner!"

At the first quiet notes of the Serenade—one of those melodies, simple, wistful, tender, that may happen to a composer, if he be fortunate, once in his lifetime, and linger in the memory of a hearer for many a day and night — Elfrida's head went down, her hand fell to toying with the stem of her glass. She experienced a desire to peep at the waiter, who was standing at attention a little way off, but she found she could not raise her eyes, and the most she could do was to steal a sidelong glance, which took in nothing above his waist. Yet she saw—or thought she saw—a sign that might be an answer to the music. His hand holding a napkin was closed, as it seemed, in a grip almost fierce.

"Elfrida," presently murmured Maggie. "He——"

"Not now, not now, Maggie," she whispered back. "Tell me afterwards."

The Serenade sighed itself out to a slight ripple of applause. Elfrida opened her bag, laid money on the cloth, and, with a movement, summoned the waiter.

He presented the bill on a plate and, at her nod, picked up and placed the money thereon, and retired.

"Frida," said Maggie, with suppressed excitement, "who is he?"

"Afterwards—afterwards! Don't look astonished at anything I may do." Elfrida put her hand to her heart, one of her little ways when moved.

She experienced a desire to peep at the waiter, who was standing at attention a little way off.

The waiter returned and put down the plate with its cluster of silver pieces.

"Thank you," said Elfrida, and transferred the last coin to her bag.

Afterwards Maggie declared that the waiter heaved a sigh of relief. At all events, he said, as he removed the empty plate:—

"Thank you, madam—very much."

"Waiter!" said Elfrida, not looking up.

He paused in his going. "Yes, ma'am?"

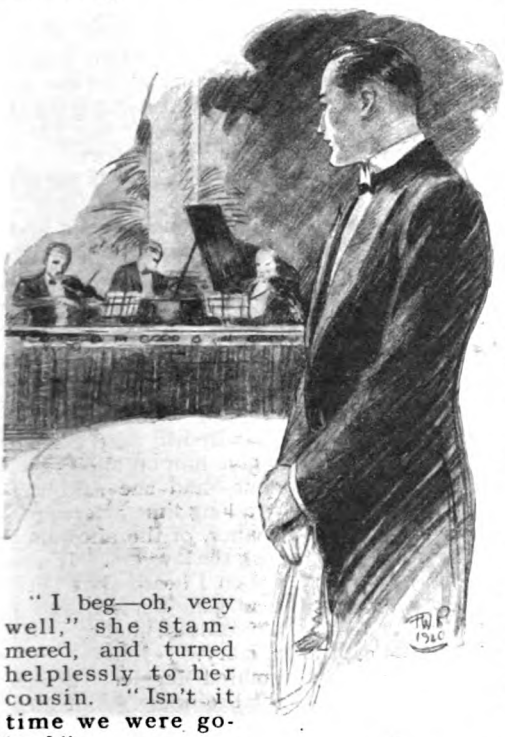
"We enjoy this restaurant and may come again, quite often"—it sounded rather like a rehearsed speech—"and, if so, we should

prefer this table. May we know your name ? "

" Certainly, ma'am. It is Frederick."

Before she knew, her eyes flashed upwards in a glance of incredulity—then fell. She blushed.

" Frederick Morland, ma'am," he said, a trifle stiffly.



" I beg—oh, very well," she stammered, and turned helplessly to her cousin. " Isn't it time we were going ? "

" It is ! " was Maggie's dry reply, as she rose. Possibly the reminder seemed necessary, for she added : " We left our wraps in the cloak-room, didn't we ? "

Elfrida got up.

" Good evening, waiter," she said, with a certain sweet dignity.

" Good evening, ma'am—and thank you," he answered, and bowed somewhat haughtily.

" Good evening," said Maggie, with an irrepressible twinkle. " It has been a lovely little dinner."

" Delighted——" He stopped short, reddening. " Good evening, ma'am."

ELFRIDA declined conversation till they were home and in her boudoir. Her mother was out at a bridge party.

" Now," said Maggie, firmly, " you are going to lie down on the couch and tell me all about Frederick."

" I can't lie down. I'm too restless." And Elfrida seated herself on a straight-backed chair. " I never felt so wretched in all my life—and so helpless ! And I behaved like a perfect idiot when he told me his name was Frederick."

" What did you expect his name to be ? "

" Dick, of course—Dick Merriman. I suppose ' Frederick ' is assumed for his present position."

" Merriman ! " Maggie's eyes opened wide. " Not—not the boy you told me about ages ago—the nephew of the Mr. Merriman who married your Aunt Annabel ? Poor things, what a tragedy that was ! But it's impossible ! The man who waited on us last night and to-night——"

" Is Dick Merriman, and no other."

" The boy you fell in love with five years ago ! "

" Don't be silly, Maggie ! I was only eighteen and I met him only once—at the Setons' house——"

" But you and he danced the whole night together ! You told me ! And now you meet him at the Planet as a waiter—how utterly romantic ! "

" Romantic ! Wait till you know the truth, Maggie. He——"

" Tell me—did they play the Serenade at that dance ? "

" Yes ; several times, as a waltz."

" I see ! And so to-night you got the band to play it to remind——"

" I wanted to make absolutely certain that he was really Dick. You see, he had a moustache—a small one—five years ago. He was just back from Palestine—not very fit—and was afraid he would have to leave the Army. He had been brought up by his uncle and——"

" One moment," interposed Maggie. " Don't you want to know what happened when the band began to play the Serenade ? "

" I don't think so—now," said Elfrida, drearily. " I ought to have considered that if it did remind him of—of anything, it would only annoy or, maybe, hurt him."

" Perhaps it hurt a little," said Maggie, softly. " At the fourth or fifth bar I saw his face change—lose its sort of stern look—and then his eyes turned to you——"

" Angry, I expect."

Maggie shook her head. " No ; sad, my dear, just awfully sad."

" And then ? " murmured Elfrida.

" That was all. Next moment he was his stiff self again. That was the only time I noticed him weaken, except when you didn't give him a tip."

" I couldn't—though perhaps he needed it." Elfrida sighed. " Are you quite sure it—it was sad, Maggie ? "

" Absolutely ! Did you expect him to be amused ? "

" I was afraid he would hate me, as well he might."

"But, dearest of kids, why?"

Elfrida brushed her hand across her eyes, got up, and began to move about. "It's a hateful situation," she began, presently, "but I must make it all clear to you, because afterwards I'm going to ask your help. I've got to bring mother into the story, and you must promise not to misjudge her. Had I been mother's age at the time, and gone through the years of hardship that she had gone through, I should probably have acted just as she did. Promise you won't misjudge her."

"I'll try not to misjudge anybody, dear." Maggie threw out her hand and caught her cousin's. "Do come and sit down. You're working yourself—and me, too—into a state of jumps, whereas, since the thing is serious, we ought to be discussing it as calmly as possible."

"I dare say you're right," Elfrida allowed, after submitting to be gently pushed into a corner of the couch; "but I can't help raging at the injustice of it all. However," she went on, "here's the story, or as much as I know of it. It was on the day of the dance, five years ago, that my people got the first news of Aunt Annabel's marriage to Mr. Merriman, in Italy. Dick—I'll call him Dick to avoid confusing him with his uncle—had heard of it too, and it gave us both something to talk about at the dance. Dick, I remember, was rather amused. The two old things had met in an hotel, fallen in love within the week, and got married as quickly as they could."

"Dick didn't resent it?" put in Maggie.

"I'm sure he didn't. He seemed to be devoted to his uncle, who had, he told me, done everything for him. He was looking forward to welcoming the young couple, as he called them, on their return to London. They were due the very next day. They stayed, I think, a week in London—I saw Aunt Annabel once, mother saw her several times, but we never met Mr. Merriman—and then they started off to spend a month or two in the South of Ireland. And in a fog the steamer——"

"Yes, I remember. Dreadful! Mr. Merriman was drowned——"

"He went down with the ship. Aunt Annabel was rescued, but died a few hours after." Elfrida paused. "But, Maggie," she went on, "here is the thing that concerns us now. Mr. Merriman, by a new will, left everything—everything, mind!—to Aunt Annabel. Aunt Annabel, by an old will, left everything to her only sister, my mother. You, of course, know what a difference it meant to mother and me. From having to count the ha'pence we were suddenly free to play with the pounds—for it was really a huge lot of money that came to mother. It didn't make her a miser, but she has always had the dread that, somehow, it might be taken from her. She doesn't mind buying things, but she won't give a penny away."

MAGGIE nodded, as one who understands. "Have you any idea why Dick got nothing?" she asked presently.

"I've been wondering why ever since. If I had not heard Dick talk as he did at the dance, I should say that he had a quarrel with his uncle over the marriage; but I feel sure there was no quarrel of that sort."

"And your mother—I mean with regard to Dick?"

"You must remember that mother had never met Dick. She heard of him only through the lawyers—and me. You must remember, too, that I was only eighteen, and mother still treated me as an infant."

"And so you did nothing?"

Elfrida sat up. "Maggie, I did what I could. I tried to get mother to give Dick a share—a half, I began with. But she would not give a hundredth part. Then I tried to get her to give him an allowance, as his uncle had done—and she said she would. It was quite a long time afterwards that I learned, by chance, of the allowance she offered him through the lawyers. It was a—an insult! And then I heard that Dick had left the Army and gone abroad, and I never saw him again till last night. And that's the end of the story."

"I wonder!" murmured Maggie. "Seems to me awfully like the beginning. But now I understand why poor Alan had no chance last night. This Dick of yours has been there all the time."

"Don't talk nonsense! There's no sentiment in the thing—don't be imagining anything of the sort, Maggie."

"No sentiment! Then why introduce the Serenade?"

"Oh, be quiet! Can't you see what's tormenting me? For five years he has been poor, or, at least, doing without things he was brought up to expect would always be his, while I've been living in luxury and having the best of good times on the money—or part of it—that ought to have been his. It's shameful—unendurable!"

"You leave out your mother, Frida."

"Mother's different. There's no use in bringing her into it. She would refuse to see the point. She has ignored it in the past. But for goodness' sake don't fancy she grudges her daughter anything. Do you know, Maggie, she allows me eight hundred a year—and I spend it all!"

"Quite a decent allowance, too. Still. I've seen you spend money—on myself, for

instance—and have guessed you had more than a pound a month." Maggie lit a cigarette and looked thoughtful. After a little while she said, "And what are you going to do about it? Dine at the Planet once a week—with me as your guest, of course!—and leave a ten-pound note under your napkin?"

"Don't try to be funny! I intend to make Dick take a share of my allowance. I shall manage nicely on half of it."

"You impossible creature! Why, all you know about this young man is that you once danced with him."

"Nearly the whole evening! Besides, we're sort of relations. What are you laughing at?"

"Swallowed some smoke." To prove her words Maggie coughed long and violently. On recovery she said, "And you think he will accept your money?"

"I tell you, it's *his* money."

"Even so, will he accept it?"

"Acceptance implies offering, and I didn't say I was going to offer it. I said I was going to *make* him take it."

"There's an old proverb about a horse that isn't thirsty."

"Old fiddlesticks! Maggie, will you help me?"

Maggie wrinkled her brows. "I'd love to," she said, slowly; "but as a go-between—h'm!"

"I'm not asking you to go near Dick, or have any communication with him. Will you help me?" Elfrida was twittering with anxiety.

"Sure thing!"

"You darling! Well——" There was a pause.

"Out with it!" said Maggie.

"It's quite a simple matter for you," said Elfrida. "Just for a moment I felt like funking it for myself. But I'll do it—I *must* do it. Maggie!"

"Go on, dear."

"Maggie, to-morrow, early in the day, I want you to introduce me to your friend, Mrs. Brown, and——"

"That's easy. But what's the idea?"

"——and to promise me that, after to-morrow, you won't go to her tea-room till I give you leave. That's all."

This time Maggie swallowed some real smoke.

THE arrangement between Elfrida and Mrs. Brown is their affair. Enough for us to know that it meant no hardship to some less fortunate girl, and to be enlightened as to its results.

Dick Merriman, in his accustomed corner of the tea-room, looked up from his newspaper to give his order, and, with a start, found himself staring at the pale face of Elfrida. She was far too nervous to blush, and it was he who coloured. For an instant he looked like smiling, but only for an instant.

"H'm! Large white coffee, please," he said, and returned to his paper, though possibly not to its news.

"Thank you, sir," replied Elfrida in a voice that seemed to her like a shriek, but was really inaudible, and retired.

She came back with the coffee, a third of it in the saucer.

"Never mind—it's all right. Thanks," he muttered, without looking at her—until she was in retreat.

Elfrida did not go near his table again that afternoon. She was feeling as though she had done a heavy day's work. Yet she had her courage, and on the next afternoon she was there for his order. He gave it without raising his head. She brought it, with scarcely any in the saucer.

"Thanks," he murmured, absently.

On the third morning she made up her mind that she would say "Isn't it a lovely day?"—quite casually, of course—and rehearsed the speech before her mirror; but, alas, when the moment arrived she took stage-fright, as it were, and emitted only a tiny squeak, to which her customer paid, as she congratulated herself, no attention. On the fourth afternoon, however, the words came out clearly—"Isn't it a lovely day?"

"Rather!" he assented, with a backward glance at the streaming window, but none at her.

Whereupon she blushed abundantly, calling herself an idiot.

The following day was Sunday, and she spent most of it in wondering whether she was not merely making a fool of herself, and in forebodings of Dick's being scared away from Mrs. Brown's. But on the Monday afternoon he came in and took his usual place, behind his newspaper, and she felt absurdly relieved. It occurred to her, as a discreet insinuation of friendliness, to take him his coffee without the formality of first approaching him for his order. This she did, without spilling a drop. But she was fortunate in that she had placed it safely on the table before the unexpected happened.

He laid down the paper and regarded her with kind, frank eyes.

"Miss Hereford," he said gently, "why are you doing this?"

She was taken aback, though the question was one of those which she had warned herself must come, sooner or later. Yet she held her ground by answering, not without an effort:—

"Mr. Merriman, why are you doing it at the Planet?"

"That happens to be my business," he replied gravely, "but this is not yours."

Now that the barrier was broken she felt a little surer of herself. "I don't mean to be impertinent——" she began.

"You aren't!" he put in pleasantly.

"But why does it happen to be your business, Mr. Merriman?"

"I will answer your question in one obvious word—necessity," he said. "Can you answer mine—why are you doing this?—as simply?"

"Yes, I can—necessity."

He looked down at his cigarette, saying: "The same thing—only different!"

"Yes; my necessity is much worse than yours."

"The imaginary," he said softly, "is usually worse than the real." He looked up suddenly. "I hope you don't resent the fact that I recognize that you are being kind to me."

Defiantly she drew herself up. "There is no kindness about it; but I will admit that I have taken this way—writing seemed hopeless—of getting in touch with you. Of course, I should never have spoken if you had not spoken first."

"Did I speak first?"

"You said: 'Large white coffee.'"

"So I did!" he solemnly agreed. "Then is there something I can do for you, Miss Hereford?"

"Yes."

"Or, rather, something you think I can do?"

"You can—you must!" She turned her head sharply, and so missed his slight head-shake and ironic smile.

People were beginning to come into the tea-room, which for the past hour had been almost deserted.

Turning back to him she said hurriedly: "It is impossible for us to talk here, Mr. Merriman."

"Quite impossible. And it is impossible for me to go on sitting here while you stand. It was only because of——"

"I know, I know. But what is to be done?" Only the thought of her mother's action of five years ago prevented her asking him to the house. "Oh, you haven't touched your coffee!" she exclaimed irrelevantly.

"I love it cold—if possible, with a skin on top," he said lightly. "I am going to make a desperate venture," he went on. "Will you honour me by lunching with me to-morrow?" A faint smile. "Not at the Planet, but at a little place called 'The Roadside,' in Newport Street? One o'clock. I would be there, awaiting you. I have, unfortunately, no free afternoons; I go on duty at four."

"Thank you," she faltered, suddenly unsure of herself again, "I shall be there at one."

"And you will not come here again?" he said gently.

Whereat her spirit revived and she answered: "I shall be waitress here as long as you are waiter at the Planet! Good afternoon!"

DURING lunch, at her request, he told her, readily enough, his history of the five years.

"Soon after the tragedy," he said, "I learned that I was of no further use as a soldier. As I had had no training for business I decided to go abroad. A friend invited me to take a share in his ranch, and I put what money I had into his farm. The farm seemed to have a hole in it. Besides, there's a little trouble in my left arm that unfits me for heavy labour. At the end of three years the hole had got so big that the farm fell into it. And I came home to look for a job. I was still looking when, ten months ago, a man stopped me in the street. He and I had been in the trenches together, so we didn't need to exchange cards. He was a sort of under-manager at the Planet, and I was grateful when he wangled me in as a waiter. And I assure you, Miss Hereford, a waiter's at the Planet isn't a half bad job."

"You like it?" she asked quickly.

"I like it a long way better than unemployment." He twirled his glass. "Perhaps one of the chief drawbacks is that the band sometimes plays the wrong tune, thereby recalling things that happened when one was not a waiter."

Elfrida felt her face grow hot. "You have not told me," she said hastily, "about your uncle. You and he quarrelled, I suppose. But perhaps I ought not to ask about that."

"We had a difference. He was easily angered, poor man, though, as a rule, he cooled down speedily."

"May I believe," said the girl timidly, "that your difference had nothing to do with his marriage to my aunt?"

"Indeed, you may believe that, Miss Hereford. I am sure your aunt and I would have become great friends. Honestly, I was glad about the marriage for my uncle's sake."

"And you are sure, too, I think, that your uncle would have got over his anger if he had lived a little longer—perhaps only a few days longer. Aren't you sure of that, too?"

"Who knows? Why go into it at this time of day, Miss Hereford?"

Dick Merriman looked up from his newspaper to give his order, and found himself staring at the pale face of Elfrida.

"Late as it is, we must go into it, Mr. Merriman. You have suffered the most frightful injustice, and my mother and I are much to blame. If you don't actually hate us——"

"Please!"

"But I must say it! I must do what I——"

"No!" His tone was soft but very firm. "You must say and do—nothing. And please do not spoil the biggest treat I've had in months and months," he continued. "You have honoured me greatly. Don't put me in the dust. You know I couldn't resist the chance of meeting and speaking with you, after those five long years. But don't make me feel that I was wrong as well as weak."

There was a pause till she said: "I don't want to spoil things; I want only to put them right. Is your pride a more precious thing than my conscience?"

"Your conscience," he answered gently, "has lost its way and wandered into your too-pitiful heart."

"You say that because I'm a girl!"

"Yes; because you are a girl. And now let us choose what ices we shall have."

She smiled in spite of herself.

"Tell me this, if you will," she said; "was the difference with your uncle over a very serious matter?"

"It was very serious to me," he replied. "But I can't think yet why it should have been so serious to him. Still, the poor old chap hated to be thwarted in any way."

"Then you didn't—unintentionally, I mean—injure him in any way?"

"In no way, unintentionally or otherwise. I've no regrets on that score."

"Forgive my asking such a question," she said. "But you see what your answer means. It means simply that you have been unjustly treated, and that it is your duty to accept some repara——"

"Miss Hereford, you are hurting me more than I can tell you. For Heaven's sake give up your beautiful idea of——"

"I will never give it up, Mr. Merriman! But"—with a look of compunction—"I will give you peace for the present I'm afraid I've been a rude, rude guest. Please, may I have a raspberry ice?"

She made one more effort, however, just after he had paid the bill.

"Although you had had no training, Mr. Merriman, with some money you could have become a partner in a business, and learned that business gradually. Isn't that so?"

"That is so," he gravely replied. "Still, don't you think I make a pretty smart waiter?"

On the pavement he inquired her destination.

"Mrs. Brown's, of course!"

"Then good-bye," he said, and was gone.

IN the evening she had a dance engagement. Coming home early, she found her mother still in the drawing-room.

"No; Alan was not there," she said, in reply to a question. "And to save you wondering, dear, I may tell you that I've found I don't want to marry Alan."

"You're always finding you don't want to marry somebody!" returned Mrs. Hereford, who within the hour had dropped four-and-sixpence at bridge.

"Not quite always," said Elfrida. "By the way, mother, about the allowance you so generously make me—where does it come from? I mean, does it come from any particular investment?"

"I understand it comes from a lot of War Loan things, exactly how much I don't remember, which I asked the lawyers to keep separate on your account. Why do you ask?"

"It would be all the same, wouldn't it, if I had the War Loan things in my own hands?"

Mrs. Hereford forgot about the four-and-sixpence. "My dear, what do you mean?"

"I should like very much if you would instruct your lawyers to pass them over to me. I'd like to have them handy in case I should get married one of these days."

"Married!" Mrs. Hereford restrained herself. "Who is it now?" she coldly inquired.

"A waiter."

"A what?"

"A waiter, mother. His name is Dick Merriman, and we've been living on his money for five years."

"How dare you, Elfrida! The money was my poor sister's. As for that wretched young man, who, as the lawyers informed me, actually laughed at my most generous offer, I had hoped he had gone abroad for good. Where is he now?"

"At the Planet Restaurant."

"You have actually seen him?"

"Quite often. I lunched with him to-day."

"Lunched! Great Heaven, child, how can you be so stupidly sentimental? And has he had the impudence to try to—er—entangle you?"

"On the contrary, dear, I'm trying hard to entangle him. If he asks me, I shall marry him. It's the least I can do."

"Marry a waiter in a restaurant! Girl, you're crazy!"

"Sometimes the waiters are nicer than the customers. My waiter is, anyway."

"He wants your money—that's it!" snapped Mrs. Hereford.

"The trouble is that he doesn't want my money," returned Elfrida. "But he's got to have it, somehow. The only way I see at the moment is marriage. So in the morning, mother, you might give me a note to your lawyers——"

"I shall stop your allowance—that's what I'll do!" cried the distracted lady.

"That won't prevent my marrying my waiter—if he asks me. I rather like him, you know. I suppose I should have to start a little greengrocery, or something, to help to make ends meet."

"Elfrida!"

"But if, after we were married, he found he had got ten thousand pounds or so, along with me, he might perhaps stop being a waiter. See?"

"Elfrida, be serious!"

Suddenly the girl faced her parent, crying: "Mother, don't I look serious?"

Mrs. Hereford gazed and was mute. The white face, with its troubled eyes and sad, pretty mouth, were answer enough. And, after all, this was her daughter, the only one. She held out her arms.

Next day, after a satisfactory chat with her mother's lawyers, Elfrida went to the tea-room with a certain lightness of heart. But Dick did not appear. Days passed and his old place knew him not. She wondered if he were ill, and one night she induced Maggie to peep into the Planet. Dick, Maggie reported, was there all right. She could not swear to his being in robust health.

Then Elfrida's spirit threatened to fail her. Yet she had vowed to wait at Mrs. Brown's as long as Dick waited at the Planet. And

at Mrs. Brown's she waited, in more senses than one. The days were not more unhappy than the nights. Conscience became comatose ; only her heart ached—and ached. Her mother, after that little outburst of loving kindness, had slipped back into the old mental obfuscation of her eternal bridge. Maggie had lost patience and gone with a party to Paris. Elfrida felt lonely, yet preferred to be alone.

Five weeks had passed when Dick once more walked into Mrs. Brown's. Roses bloomed in Elfrida's cheeks, only to die. Dick looked so sad and weary as he sank into his old corner.

Without spilling more than half of it, she brought him his coffee.

Without thanks or preface he said : " I've come to implore you to stop it."

" What ? " she exclaimed with unreal levity ; " stop it, just when I'm beginning to enjoy it ? "

A waiter took her cloak. For a moment she stood before Dick, silent, in her finery.

" It's making you ill. You look awfully wearied. It's plucky, but——"

" Didn't you expect to find me here ? "

" Oh, yes. I've watched you go in every day since we last met. Please tell me that you will give it up."

" Are you giving up the Planet ? "

" No."

" Then——"

" One moment, please. I've got the night off from the Planet. I came to ask you to dine with me at ' The Roadside '—seven-thirty. Will you ? "

" Yes," she answered, and turned away to one of the windows, her eyes wet.

Leaving money on the table, he went out.

ELFRIDA went home early and put on her prettiest dinner frock. When they met he apologized for not being in evening kit—didn't want to look like a waiter. Somehow they both laughed. It was a good beginning.

" Let's dine happily," he whispered.

" I sha'n't persecute," she replied.

A waiter took her cloak. For a moment she stood before Dick, silent, in her finery. Dick's heart failed him. She was so much lovelier than five years ago. Then he pulled himself together to " dine happily."

And it was quite a cheerful little dinner, though neither, perhaps, could have told why. When it was over he asked whether she would care for a picture-house.

" I'd rather just walk around," she replied ; " it's such a lovely night."

So they walked around, goodness knew whither, but at the end of an hour or so they found themselves in some old-fashioned " gardens," where was no traffic and scarce a sound, save that of an ancient gramophone behind an open window. Their talk was still impersonal, but it was failing. Never once had the girl's " conscience " spoken ; possibly the thought of the money was no longer alert in her mind. It seemed that she was content to drift.

Rather abruptly the man said :—

" It's time I was taking you home, but there's one thing I want to tell you."

As by a tacit arrangement they came to a stop in the black shadow of a tree. From the window near at hand blared the gramophone in an obsolete fox-trot.

" I want to tell you," he resumed, " that I've decided to go abroad again. I shall go almost immediately. A day's notice is all that is required at the Planet."

So he had beaten her after all ! For a space Elfrida was unable to find speech, conscious only of a devastating sense of defeat. Yet she fought against it.

" What are you going to do abroad ? " she said at last, rather coldly.

" I dare say I shall find something to do before long."

" You have suddenly tired of being a waiter ? "

" I shall probably be a waiter abroad," was his reply.

" Oh ! " And she realized that she was making him go abroad. " That means, of course, that I remain at Mrs. Brown's."

" Not at all. You said you would remain at Mrs. Brown's as long as I remained at the Planet—and you are a girl of your word, as you have already shown. To-morrow will be my last day at the Planet."

" But need you go abroad merely in order to—to beat me ? "

He was silent, and in the pause the gramophone ceased.

" Will you tell me," she said, with difficulty, " just when you decided on this ? It must have been since you called at Mrs. Brown's this afternoon."

Looking into the dark garden he answered : " It was when you took off your cloak to-night."

And she was silent. But the gramophone began again.

Blessed old groggy gramophone—thrice blessed ! Not blaring this time, but soft and sweet as a worn record would allow, it sent forth the wistful notes of the Serenade, drawing two sorry young hearts forth and together.

" Elfrida ! Elfrida ! "

" Oh, Dick ! "

And with the last note—

" But, Elfrida, you can't—you *can't* marry a waiter ! "

" N-not unless he asks me," said Elfrida.

And later—in the taxi—

" Dick, I keep wondering about your uncle. You must have thwarted him pretty badly."

" Well," said Dick, " I've been in love with you for five years."

" M'm ! I must try to believe you—but I was thinking about your uncle."

" So was I, poor old chap ! For I can tell you now why we differed. When I met him, on the day after our dance, almost the first thing he told me was that he had chosen a wife for me——"

" Oh ! Who was she ? Tell me at once ! "

" Don't know. You see, I had to tell him he was too late."

" Then—then, oh, Dick, it was all my fault ! "

" All your fault, beloved ! "

The Perfect Murder

By STACY AUMONIER

Illustrated by
NORMAN SUTCLIFFE

ONE evening in November two brothers were seated in a little *café* in the rue de la Roquette discussing murders. The evening papers lay in front of them, and they all contained a lurid account of a shocking affair in the Landes district, where a charcoal-burner had killed his wife and two children with a hatchet. From discussing this murder in particular they went on to discussing murder in general.

"I've never yet read a murder case without being impressed by the extraordinary clumsiness of it," remarked Paul, the younger brother. "Here's this fellow murders his victims with his own hatchet, leaves his hat behind in the shed, and arrives at a village hard by with blood on his boots."

"They lose their heads," said Henri, the elder. "In cases like that they are mentally unbalanced, hardly responsible for their actions."

"Yes," replied Paul, "but what impresses me is—what a lot of murders must be done by people who take trouble, who leave not a trace behind."

Henri shrugged his shoulders. "I shouldn't think it was so easy, old boy; there's always something that crops up."

"Nonsense! I'll guarantee there are thousands done every year. If you are living with anyone, for instance, it must be the easiest thing in the world to murder them."

"How?"

"Oh, some kind of accident—and then you go screaming into the street, 'Oh, my poor wife! Help!' You burst into tears, and everyone consoles you. I read of a woman somewhere who murdered her husband by leaving the window near the bed open at night when he was suffering from pneumonia. Who's going to suspect a case like that? Instead of that, people must always select revolvers, or knives, or go and buy poison at the chemist's across the way."

"It sounds as though you were contemplating a murder yourself," laughed Henri.

"Well, you never know," answered Paul; "circumstances might arise when a murder would be the only way out of a difficulty. If ever my time comes I shall take a lot of trouble about it. I promise you I shall leave no trace behind."

As Henri glanced at his brother making this remark he was struck by the fact that there was indeed nothing irreconcilable between the idea of a murder and the idea of Paul doing it. He was a big, saturnine-looking gentleman with a sallow, dissolute face, framed in a black square beard and swathes of untidy grey hair. His profession was that of a traveller in cheap jewellery, and his business dealings were not always of the straightest. Henri shuddered. With his own puny physique, bad health, and vacillating will, he was always dominated by his younger brother. He himself was a clerk in a drapery store, and he had a wife and three children. Paul was unmarried.

The brothers saw a good deal of each other, and were very intimate. But the word friendship would be an extravagant term to apply to their relationship. They were

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both always hard up, and they borrowed money from each other when every other source failed.

They had no other relatives except a very old uncle and aunt who lived at Chantilly. This uncle and aunt, whose name was Taillandier, were fairly well off, but they would have little to do with the two nephews. They were occasionally invited there to dinner, but neither Paul nor Henri ever succeeded in extracting a franc out of Uncle Robert. He was a very religious man, hard-fisted, cantankerous, and intolerant. His wife was a little more pliable. She was in effect an eccentric. She had spasms of generosity, during which periods both the brothers had at times managed to get money out of her. But these were rare occasions. Moreover, the old man kept her so short of cash that she found it difficult to help her nephews even if she desired to.

As stated, the discussion between the two brothers occurred in November. It was presumably forgotten by both of them immediately afterwards. And indeed there is no reason to believe that it would ever have recurred, except for certain events which followed the sudden death of Uncle Robert in the February of the following year.

IN the meantime the affairs of both Paul and Henri had gone disastrously. Paul had been detected in a dishonest transaction over a paste trinket, and had just been released from a period of imprisonment. The knowledge of this had not reached his uncle before his death. Henri's wife had had another baby, and had been very ill. He was more in debt than ever.

The news of the uncle's death came as a gleam of hope in the darkness of despair. What kind of will had he left? Knowing their uncle, each was convinced that, however it was framed, there was likely to be little or nothing for them. However, the old villain might have left them a thousand or two. And in any case, if the money was all left to the wife, here was a possible field of plunder. It need hardly be said that they repaired with all haste to the funeral, and even with greater alacrity to the lawyer's reading of the will.

The will contained surprises both encouraging and discouraging. In the first place the old man left a considerably larger fortune than anyone could have anticipated. In the second place all the money and securities were carefully tied up, and placed under the control of trustees. There were large bequests to religious charities, whilst the residue was held in trust for his wife. But so far as the brothers were concerned the surprise came at the end. On her death this residue was still to be held in trust, but a portion of the interest was to be divided between Henri and Paul, and on their death to go to the Church. The old man had recognized a certain call of the blood after all!

They both behaved with tact and discretion at the funeral, and were extremely sympathetic and solicitous towards Aunt Rosalie, who was too absorbed with her own trouble to take much notice of them. It was only when it came to the reading of the will that their avidity and interest outraged perhaps the strict canons of good taste. It was Paul who managed to get it clear from the notary what the exact amount would probably be. Making allowances for fluctuations, accidents, and acts of God, on the death of Mme. Taillandier the two brothers would inherit something between eight and ten thousand francs a year each. She was now eighty-two and very frail.

The brothers celebrated the good news with a carouse up in Montmartre. Naturally their chief topic of conversation was how long the old bird would keep on her perch. In any case, it could not be many years. With any luck it might be only a few weeks. The fortune seemed blinding. It would mean comfort and security to the end of their days. The rejoicings were mixed with recriminations against the old man for his stinginess. Why couldn't he have left them a lump sum down now? Why did he want to waste all this good gold on the Church? Why all this trustee business?

There was little they could do but await developments. Except that in the meantime—after a decent interval—they might try and touch the old lady for a bit. They parted, and the next day set about their business in cheerier spirits.

For a time they were extremely tactful. They made formal calls on Aunt Rosalie, inquiring after her health, and offering their services in any capacity whatsoever. But at the end of a month Henri called hurriedly one morning, and after the usual professions of solicitude asked his aunt if she could possibly lend him one hundred and twenty francs to pay the doctor who had attended his wife and baby. She lent him forty, grumbling at his foolishness at having children he could not afford to keep. A week later came Paul with a story about being robbed by a client. He wanted a hundred. She lent him ten.

When these appeals had been repeated three or four times, and received similar treatment—and sometimes no treatment at all—the old lady began to get annoyed. She was becoming more and more eccentric. She now had a companion, an angular,

middle-aged woman named Mme. Chavanne, who appeared like a protecting goddess. Sometimes when the brothers called Mme. Chavanne would say that Mme. Taillandier was too unwell to see anyone. If this news had been true it would have been good news indeed, but the brothers suspected that it was all prearranged. Two years went by, and they both began to despair.

"She may live to a hundred," said Paul.

"We shall die of old age first," grumbled Henri.

It was difficult to borrow money on the strength of the will. In the first place their friends were more of the borrowing than the lending class. And anyone who had a little was suspicious of the story, and wanted all kinds of securities. It was Paul who first thought of going to an insurance company to try to raise money on the reversionary interest. They did succeed in the end in getting an insurance company to advance them two thousand francs each, but the negotiations took five months to complete, and by the time they had insured their lives, paid the lawyer's fees and paid for the various deeds and stamps, and signed some thirty or forty forms, each man only received a little over a thousand francs, which was quickly lost in paying accrued debts and squandering the remainder. Their hopes were raised by the dismissal of Mme. Chavanne, only to be lowered again by the arrival of an even more aggressive companion. The companions came and went with startl ng rapidity. None of them could stand for any time the old lady's eccentricity and ill-temper. The whole of the staff was always being changed. The only one who remained loyal all through was the portly cook, Ernestine. Even this may have been due to the fact that she never came in touch with her mistress. She was an excellent cook, and she never moved from the kitchen. Moreover, the cooking required by Mme. Taillandier was of the simplest nature, and she seldom entertained. And she hardly ever left her apartment. Any complaints that were made were made through the housekeeper, and the complaints and their retaliations became mellowed in the process; for Ernestine also had a temper of her own.

Nearly another year passed before what appeared to Paul to be a mild stroke of good fortune came his way. Things had been going from bad to worse. Neither of the brothers was in a position to lend a sou to the other. Henri's family was becoming a greater drag, and people were not buying Paul's trinkets.

ONE day, during an interview with his aunt—he had been trying to borrow more money—he fainted in her presence. It is difficult to know what it was about this act which affected the old lady, but she ordered him to be put to bed in one of the rooms of the villa. Possibly she jumped to the conclusion that he had fainted from lack of food—which was not true—Paul never went without food and drink—and she suddenly realized that after all he was her husband's sister's son. He must certainly have looked pathetic, this white-faced man, well past middle age, and broken in life. Whatever it was, she showed a broad streak of compassion for him. She ordered her servants to look after him, and to allow him to remain until she countermanded the order.

Paul, who had certainly felt faint, but quickly seized the occasion to make it as dramatic as possible, saw in this an opportunity to wheedle his way into his aunt's favours. His behaviour was exemplary. The next morning, looking very white and shaky, he visited her, and asked her to allow him to go, as he had no idea of abusing her hospitality. If he had taken up the opposite attitude she would probably have turned him out, but because he suggested going she ordered him to stop. During the daytime he went about his dubious business, but he continued to return there at night to sleep, and to enjoy a good dinner cooked by the admirable Ernestine. He was in clover.

Henri was naturally envious when he heard of his brother's good fortune. And Paul was fearful that Henri would spoil the whole game by going and throwing a fit himself in the presence of the aunt. But this, of course, would have been too obvious and foolish for even Henri to consider seriously. And he racked his brains for some means of inveigling the old lady. Every plan he put forth, however, Paul sat upon. He was quite comfortable himself, and he didn't see the point of his brother butting in.

"Besides," he said, "she may turn me out any day. Then you can have your shot."

They quarrelled about this, and did not see each other for some time. One would have thought that Henri's appeal to Mme. Taillandier would have been stronger than Paul's. He was a struggling individual, with a wife and four children. Paul was a notorious ne'er-do-well, and he had no attachments. Nevertheless the old lady continued to support Paul. Perhaps it was because he was a big man, and she liked big men. Her husband had been a man of fine physique. Henri was puny, and she despised him. She had never had children of her own, and she disliked children. She was always upbraiding Henri and his wife for their fecundity. Any attempt to pander to

her emotions through the sentiment of childhood failed. She would not have the children in her house. And any small acts of charity which she bestowed upon them seemed to be done more with the idea of giving her an opportunity to inflict her sarcasm and venom upon them than out of kindness of heart.

In Paul, on the other hand, she seemed to find something slightly attractive. She sometimes sent for him, and he, all agog—expecting to get his notice to quit—would be agreeably surprised to find that, on the contrary, she had some little commission she wished him to execute. And you may rest assured that he never failed to make a few francs out of all these occasions. The notice to quit did not come. It may be—poor deluded woman!—that she regarded him as some kind of protection. He was in any case the only "man" who slept under her roof.

At first she seldom spoke to him, but as time went on she would sometimes send for him to relieve her loneliness. Nothing could have been more ingratiating than Paul's manners in these circumstances. He talked expansively about politics, knowing beforehand his aunt's views, and just what she would like him to say. Her eyesight was very bad, and he would read her the news of the day, and tell her what was happening in Paris. He humoured her every whim. He was astute enough to see that it would be foolish and dangerous to attempt to borrow money for the moment. He was biding his time, and trying to think out the most profitable plan of campaign. There was no immediate hurry. His bed was comfortable, and Ernestine's cooking was excellent.

IN another year's time he had established himself as quite one of the permanent household. He was consulted about the servants, and the doctors, and the management of the house, everything except the control of money, which was jealously guarded by a firm of lawyers. Many a time he would curse his uncle's foresight. The old man's spirit seemed to be hovering in the dim recesses of the overcrowded rooms, mocking him. For the old lady, eccentric and foolish in many ways, kept a strict check upon her dividends. It was her absorbing interest in life, that and an old grey parroquet, which she treated like a child. Its name was Anna, and it used to walk up and down her table at meal-times and feed off her own plate. Finding himself so firmly entrenched, Paul's assurance gradually increased. He began to treat his aunt as an equal, and sometimes even to contradict her, and she did not seem to resent it.

In the meantime Henri was eating his heart out with jealousy and sullen rage. The whole thing was unfair. He occasionally saw Paul, who boasted openly of his strong position in the Taillandier household, and he would not believe that Paul was not getting money out of the old lady as well as board and lodging. With no additional expenses Paul was better dressed than he used to be, and he looked fatter and better in health. All—or nearly all—of Henri's appeals, although pitched in a most pathetic key, were rebuffed. He felt a bitter hatred against his aunt, his brother, and life in general. If only she would die! What was the good of life to a woman at eighty-five or six? And there was he—four young children, clamouring for food, and clothes, and the ordinary decent comforts. And there was Paul, idling his days away at *cafés* and his nights at cabarets—nothing to do, and no responsibilities.

Meeting Paul one day he said:—

"I say, old boy, couldn't you spring me a hundred francs? I haven't the money to pay my rent next week."

"She gives me nothing," replied Paul.

Henri did not believe this, but it would be undiplomatic to quarrel. He said:—

"Aren't there—isn't there some little thing lying about the villa you could slip in your pocket? We could sell it, see? Go shares. I'm desperately pushed."

Paul looked down his nose. Name of a pig! did Henri think he had never thought of that? Many and many a time the temptation had come to him. But no; every few months people came from the lawyer's office, and the inventory of the whole household was checked. The servants could not be suspected. They were not selected without irreproachable characters. If he were suspected—well, all kinds of unpleasant things might crop up. Oh, no, he was too well off where he was. The game was to lie in wait. The old lady simply must die soon. She had even been complaining of her chest that morning. She was always playing with the parroquet. Somehow this bird got on Paul's nerves. He wanted to wring its neck. He imitated the way she would say: "There's a pretty lady! Oh, my sweet! Another nice grape for my little one. There's a pretty lady!" He told Henri all about this, and the elder brother went on his way with a grunt that only conveyed doubt and suspicion.

In view of this position it seemed strange that in the end it was Paul who was directly responsible for the *dénouement* in the Taillandier household. His success went to his rather weak head like wine. He began to swagger and bluster and abuse his aunt's hospitality. And, curiously enough,

Paul would read to her the news of the day, and tell her what was happening in Paris.

the more he advanced the further she withdrew. The eccentric old lady seemed to be losing her powers of resistance so far as he was concerned. And he began to borrow small sums of money from her, and, as she acquiesced so readily, to increase his demands. He let his travelling business go, and sometimes he would get lost for days at a time. He would spend his time at the races, and drinking with doubtful acquaintances in obscure *cafés*. Sometimes he won, but in the majority of cases he lost. He ran up bills and got into debt. By cajoling small sums out of his aunt he kept his debtors at bay for nearly nine months.

But one evening he came to see Henri in a great state of distress. His face, which had taken on a healthier glow when he first went to live with his aunt, had become puffy and livid. His eyes were bloodshot.

" Old boy," he said, " I'm at my wits' end. I've got to find seven thousand francs by

the twenty-first of the month, or they're going to foreclose. How do you stand ? I'll pay you back."

To try to borrow money from Henri was like appealing to the desert for a cooling draught. He also had to find money by the twenty-first, and he was overdrawn at the bank. They exchanged confidences, and in their mutual distress they felt sorry for each other and for themselves. It was a November evening, and the rain was driving along the boulevards in fitful gusts. After trudging a long way they turned into a little *café* in the rue de la Roquette, and sat down and ordered two cognacs. The *café* was almost deserted. A few men in mackintoshes were scattered around reading the evening papers. They sat at a marble table in the corner and tried to think of ways and means. But after a time a silence fell between them. There seemed nothing more to suggest. They could hear the rain beating on the skylight. An old man four tables away was poring over *La Patrie*.

Suddenly Henri looked furtively around the room and clutched his brother's arm.

" Paul ! " he whispered.

" What is it ? "

" Do you remember—it has all come back to me—suddenly—one night, a night something like this—it must be five or six years ago—we were seated here in this same *café*—do you remember ? "

" No. I don't remember. What was it ? "

" It was the night of that murder in the Landes district. We got talking about—don't you remember ? "

Paul scratched his temple and sipped the cognac. Henri leant closer to him.

" You said—you said that if you lived with anyone, it was the easiest thing in the world to murder them. An accident, you know. And you go screaming into the street——"

Paul started, and stared at his brother, who continued :—

" You said that if ever you—you had to do it, you would guarantee that you would take every trouble. You wouldn't leave a trace behind."

Paul was acting. He pretended to half remember, to half understand. But his eyes narrowed. Imbecile! Hadn't he been through it all in imagination a hundred times? Hadn't he already been planning and scheming an act for which his brother would reap half the benefit ? Nevertheless he was staggered. He never imagined that the suggestion would come from Henri. He was secretly relieved. If Henri was to receive half the benefit, let him also share half the responsibilities. The risk in any case would be wholly his. He grinned enigmatically, and they put their heads together. And so in that dim corner of the *café* was planned the perfect murder.

COMING up against the actual proposition, Paul had long since realized that the affair was not so easy of accomplishment as he had so airily suggested. For the thing must be done without violence, without clues, without trace. Such ideas as leaving the window open at night were out of the question, as the companion slept in the same room. Moreover, the old lady was quite capable of getting out of bed and shutting it herself, if she felt a draught. Some kind of accident ? Yes, but what ? Suppose she slipped and broke her neck when Paul was in the room. It would be altogether too suspicious. Besides, she would probably only partially break her neck. She would regain sufficient consciousness to tell. To drown her in her bath ? The door was always locked or the companion hovering around.

" You've always got to remember," whispered Paul, " if any suspicion falls on me, there's the motive. There's a strong motive why I should—it's got to be absolutely untraceable. I don't care if some people do suspect afterwards—when we've got the money."

" What about her food ? "

" The food is cooked by Ernestine, and the companion serves it. Besides, suppose I got a chance to tamper with the food, how am I going to get hold of—you know ? "

" Weed-killer ? "

" Yes, I should be in a pretty position if they traced the fact that I had bought weed-killer. *You* might buy some and let me have a little on the quiet."

Henri turned pale. " No, no ; the motive applies to me too. They'd get us both."

When the two pleasant gentlemen parted at midnight their plans were still very immature, but they arranged to meet the following evening. It was the thirteenth of the month. To save the situation the deed must be accomplished within eight days. Of course they wouldn't get the money at once, but, knowing the circumstances, creditors would be willing to wait. When they met the following evening in the Café des Sentiers, Paul appeared flushed and excited, and Henri was pale and on edge. He hadn't slept. He wanted to wash the whole thing out.

" And sell up your home, I suppose ? " sneered Paul. " Listen, my little cabbage. I've got it. Don't distress yourself. You proposed this last night. I've been thinking about it and watching for months. Ernestine is a good cook, and very methodical. Oh, very methodical ! She does everything every day in the same way exactly to

Suddenly Henri looked furtively around the room and clutched his brother's arm. "Paul!" he whispered.

schedule. My apartment is on the same floor, so I am able to appreciate her punctuality and exactness. The old woman eats sparingly and according to routine. One night she has fish. The next night she has a soufflé made with two eggs. Fish, soufflé, fish, soufflé, regular as the beat of a clock. Now listen. After lunch every day Ernestine washes up the plates and pans. After that she prepares roughly the evening meal. If it is a fish night, she prepares the fish ready to pop into the pan. If it is a soufflé night, she beats up two eggs and puts them ready in a basin. Having done that, she changes her frock, powders her nose, and goes over to the convent to see her sister who is working there. She is away an hour and a half. She returns punctually at four o'clock. You could set your watch by her movements."

"Yes, but——"

"It is difficult to insert what I propose in fish, but I don't see any difficulty in dropping it into two beaten-up eggs, and

giving an extra twist to the egg-whisk, or whatever they call it."

Henri's face was quite grey.

"But—but—Paul, how are you going to get hold of the—poison?"

"Who said anything about poison?"

"Well, but what?"

"That's where *you* come in."

"I!"

"Yes, you're in it too, aren't you? You get half the spoils, don't you? Why shouldn't you—some time to-morrow when your wife's out——"

"What?"

"Just grind up a piece of glass."

"Glass!"

"Yes, you've heard of glass, haven't you? An ordinary piece of broken wine-glass will do. Grind it up as fine as a powder, the finer the better, the finer the more—effective."

Henri gasped. No, no, he couldn't do this thing. Very well, then; if he was such a coward Paul would have to do it himself. And perhaps when the time came Henri would also be too frightened to draw his dividends. Perhaps he would like to make them over to his dear brother Paul? Come, it was only a little thing to do. Eight days to the twenty-first. To-morrow, fish day, but Wednesday would be soufflé. So easy, so untraceable, so safe.

"But you," whined Henri, "they will suspect you."

"Even if they do they can prove nothing. But in order to avoid this unpleasantness I propose to leave home soon after breakfast. I shall return at a quarter-past three, letting myself in through the stable yard. The stables, as you know, are not used. There is no one else on that floor. Ernestine is upstairs. She only comes down to answer the front-door bell. I shall be in and out of the house within five minutes, and I sha'n't return till late at night, when perhaps—I may be too late to render assistance."

Henri was terribly agitated. On one hand was—just murder, a thing he had never connected himself with in his life. On the other hand was comfort for himself and his family, an experience he had given up hoping for. It was in any case not exactly murder on his part. It was Paul's murder. At the same time, knowing all about it, being an accessory before the fact, it would seem contemptible to a degree to put the whole onus on Paul. Grinding up a piece of glass was such a little thing. It couldn't possibly incriminate him. Nobody could ever prove that he'd done it. But it was a terrible step to take.

"Have another cognac, my little cabbage."

It was Paul's voice that jerked him back to actuality. He said: "All right, yes, yes," but whether this referred to the cognac or to the act of grinding up a piece of glass he hardly knew himself.

FROM that moment to twenty-four hours later, when he handed over a white packet to his brother across the same table at the Café des Sentiers, Henri seemed to be in a nightmarish dream. He had no recollection of how he had passed the time. He seemed to pass from that last cognac to this one, and the interval was a blank.

"Fish to-day, soufflé to-morrow," he heard Paul chuckling. "Brother, you have done your work well."

When Paul went he wanted to call after him to come back, but he was frightened of the sound of his own voice. He was terribly frightened. He went to bed very late and could not sleep. The next morning he awoke with a headache, and he got his wife to telegraph to the office to say that he was too ill to come. He lay in bed all day, visualizing over and over and over again the possible events of the evening.

Paul would be caught. Someone would catch him actually putting the powder into the eggs. He would be arrested. Paul would give *him* away. Why did Paul say it was so easy to murder anyone if you lived with them? It wasn't easy at all. The whole thing was chock-a-block with dangers and pitfalls. Pitfalls! At half-past three he started up in bed. He had a vision of himself and Paul being guillotined side by side! He must stop it at any cost. He began to get up. Then he realized that it was already too late. The deed had been done. Paul had said that he would be in and out of the house within five minutes at three-fifteen—a quarter of an hour ago! Where was Paul? Would he be coming to see him? He was going to spend the evening out somewhere, "returning late at night."

He dressed feverishly. There was still time. He could call at his aunt's. Rush down to the kitchen, seize the basin of beaten-up eggs, and throw them away. But where? how? By the time he got there Ernestine would have returned. She would want to know all about it. The egg mixture would be examined, analysed. God in Heaven! it was too late! The thing would have to go on, and he suffer and wait.

Having dressed, he went out after saying to his wife:—

"It's all right. It's going to be all right," not exactly knowing what he meant. He walked rapidly along the streets, with no fixed destination in his mind. He found himself in the *café* in the rue de la Roquette, where the idea was first conceived, where he had reminded his brother.

He sat there drinking, waiting for the hours to pass.

Soufflé day, and the old lady dined at seven! It was now not quite five. He hoped Paul would turn up. A stranger tried to engage him in conversation. The stranger apparently had some grievance against a railway company. He wanted to tell him his wife and children. He tried to concentrate on the future, how he could manage on eight or ten thousand francs a year. He would give notice at the office, be rude to people who had been bullying him for years—that old blackguard Mocquin!

At ten o'clock he was drunk, torpid, and indifferent. The whole thing was over for

"Henri! Henri! Wake up! What is the matter with you?"

all the details about a contract for rivets, over which he had been disappointed. Henri didn't understand a word he was talking about. He didn't listen. He wanted the stranger to drop down dead, or vanish into thin air. At last he called the waiter and paid for his reckoning, indicated by a small pile of saucers. From there he walked rapidly to the Café des Sentiers, looking for Paul. He was not there. Six o'clock. One hour more. He could not keep still. He paid and went on again, calling at *café* after *café*. A quarter to seven. Pray God that she threw it away. Had he ground it fine enough?

Five minutes to seven. Seven o'clock. Now. He picked up his hat and went again. The brandy had gone to his head. At half-past seven he laughed recklessly. After all, what was the good of life to this old woman of eighty-six? He tried to convince himself that he had done it for the sake of good or ill. What did it matter? He terribly wanted to see Paul, but he was too tired to care very much. The irrevocable step had been taken. He went home to bed and fell into a heavy drunken sleep.

"HENRI! Henri! Wake up! What is the matter with you?"

His wife was shaking him. He blinked his way into a partial condition of consciousness. November sunlight was pouring into the room.

"It's late, isn't it?" he said, involuntarily.

"It's past eight. You'll be late at the office. You didn't go yesterday. If you go on like this you'll get the sack, and then what shall we do?"

Slowly the recollection of last night's events came back to him.

"There's nothing to worry about," he said. "I'm too ill to go to-day. Send them another telegram. It'll be all right."

His wife looked at him searchingly. "You've been drinking," she said. "Oh, you men! God knows what will become of us."

She appeared to be weeping in her apron. It struck him forcibly at that instant how provoking and small women are. Here was Jeannette crying over her petty troubles. Whereas he——

The whole thing was becoming vivid again. Where was Paul? What had happened? Was it at all likely that he could go down to an office on a day like this, a day that was to decide his fate?

He groaned, and elaborated rather pathetically his imaginary ailments, anything to keep this woman quiet. She left him at last, and he lay there waiting for something to happen. The hours passed. What would be the first intimation? Paul or the gendarmes? Thoughts of the latter stirred him to a state of fevered activity. About midday he arose, dressed, and went out. He told his wife he was going to the office, but he had no intention of doing so. He went and drank coffee at a place up in the Marais. He was terrified of his old haunts. He wandered from place to place, uncertain how to act. Late in the afternoon he entered a *café* in the rue Alibert. At a kiosk outside he bought a late edition of an afternoon newspaper. He sat down, ordered a drink, and opened the newspaper. He glanced at the central news page, and as his eye absorbed one paragraph he unconsciously uttered a low scream. The paragraph was as follows:—

MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT CHANTILLY.

A mysterious affair occurred at Chantilly this morning. A middle-aged man, named Paul Denoyel, complained of pains in the stomach after eating an omelette. He died soon after in great agony. He was staying with his aunt, Mme. Taillandier. No other members of the household were affected. The matter is to be inquired into.

THE rest was a dream. He was only vaguely conscious of the events which followed. He wandered through it all, the instinct of self-preservation bidding him hold his tongue in all circumstances. He knew nothing. He had seen nothing. He had a visionary recollection of a plump, weeping Ernestine, at the inquest, enlarging upon the eccentricities of her mistress. A queer woman, who would brook no contradiction. He heard a lot about the fish day and the soufflé day, and how the old lady insisted that this was a fish day, and that she had had a soufflé the day before. You could not argue with her when she was like that. And Ernestine had beaten up the eggs all ready for the soufflé—most provoking! But Ernestine was a good cook, of method and economy. She wasted nothing. What should she do with the eggs? Why, of course, Mr. Paul, who since he had come to live there was never content with a *café complet*. He must have a breakfast, like these English and other foreigners do. She made him an omelette, which he ate heartily.

Then the beaten-up eggs with their deadly mixture were intended for Mme. Taillandier? But who was responsible for this? Ernestine? But there was no motive here. Ernestine gained nothing by her mistress's death. Indeed she only stood to lose her situation. Motive? Was it possible that the deceased—— The inquiry went on a long while. Henri himself was conscious of being in the witness-box. He knew nothing. He couldn't understand it. His brother would not be likely to do that. He himself was prostrate with grief. He loved his brother.

There was nothing to do but return an open verdict. Shadowy figures passed before his mind's eye—shadowy figures and shadowy realizations. He had perfectly murdered his brother. The whole of the dividends of the estate would one day be his, and his wife's and children's. Eighteen thousand francs a year! One day——

One vision more vivid than the rest—the old lady on the day following the inquest, seated bolt upright at her table, like a figure of perpetuity, playing with the old grey parroquet, stroking its mangy neck.

"There's a pretty lady! Oh, my sweet! Another nice grape for my little one. There's a pretty lady!"

THE WORLD OF ATHLETICS

EVENTS in which BRITISH RUNNERS STILL HOLD THE RECORD

By

Harold M. Abrahams

(World's Sprint Champion, Olympic Games, Paris, 1924).

One hears much pessimistic talk regarding the decline of British athletes compared with those of other nations. The aim of this article is to show, what is too often overlooked, that in middle-distance races, such as the half-mile and the mile, British runners are still champions of the world.

IT is not a particularly difficult task to demonstrate beyond possible refutation that Great Britain no longer reigns supreme in every branch of sport. But few people seem to realize that there is still one department in which British athletes more than hold their own. I say advisedly "more than hold their own," because I am convinced that the time is long past when any one nation can expect to have a complete monopoly of champions in any sport. That this state of affairs existed say fifty years ago is, I think, established; and also that the English athlete was at that date almost invincible, chiefly because he belonged, practically speaking, to the only nation which indulged at all extensively in games. That to-day the United States dominates the world market is again obvious, but it is becoming more and more clear that, as the number of nations practising sport increases, the spoils of athletic victory will be more and more divided.

If this contention be an accurate one, and if we may assume that each nation is going to train as seriously as the other, we shall then expect to find that nations will tend to succeed in those particular branches of athletics for which Nature has especially singled them out. This article is an attempt to show that the natural ability of British athletes lies in middle-distance running.

It must be appreciated that success in athletics depends on natural ability combined with training. In the majority of running events, except those which can be reduced to pure automatism (as sprinting can), the dominant factor is natural ability, and, although training does play a very significant part, it is easy to appreciate that there is not so much room for scientific study as there is in, say, lawn tennis, golf, or field events. I appreciate that all generalizations are open to criticism, and therefore such conclusions as I shall draw from a few statistics which I propose to take must not be thought to be uncontradictable. I have analysed various results of competitions in which British athletes have been in contest with Americans and others, and have found certain interesting similarities in the results of these various contests which make it possible to indicate with a fair amount of conviction wherein the Britisher excels.

For the purpose of discovering the position of Great Britain in the field of athletics to-day, I have analysed the results of the last four Olympic Games, the contests between Oxford and Cambridge on the one hand, and Harvard and Yale or Princeton and Cornell on the other, and the results of the Amateur Athletic Championships since the war. I believe that it would serve no useful purpose to consider merely the winners of the various events, because such a means of argument is apt to be unnecessarily vague; the winner of an Olympic event cannot be said to be any real indication of the general standard. I realize that even to take the Olympic Games at all lays

me open to the criticism that I am all the while arguing from the particular to the general. I have, however, analysed the results of the last four Olympic Games and taken the finalists (first six) in each event. The following table is compiled from the results of the Games held in London in 1908, Stockholm in 1912, Antwerp in 1920, and Paris in 1924. I have made no distinction between the first man and the sixth, and the table therefore shows the number of athletes of Olympic standard which the six countries have produced in the last sixteen years. Altogether the results analysed concern some three hundred and seventy-one athletes, one hundred and forty-four on the track and two hundred and twenty-seven in the field.

TABLE SHOWING THE FIRST SIX PLACE WINNERS AT THE LAST FOUR OLYMPIC GAMES, WITH THE FIRST SIX NATIONS.

Metres.	Max. Points Poss.	United States.	Great Britain.	Sweden.	Finland.	Canada.	France.
100	21	14	2			1	1
200	22	13	5			1	
400	21	10	5	1		1	
800	24	13	5				
1,500	20	6	9	1	1	1	
5,000	18	3	4	3	6		2
10,000	18	3	4	1	7	1	2
TOTAL TRACK	144	62	34	6	14	5	5
110m. Hurdles	22	16	1	2		1	
400m. Hurdles	16	9	3	1	1		2
High Jump	24	15	2	2			2
Long Jump	24	12	1	4	1	2	1
Hop, Step	24	5	1	7	3	2	
Pole	24	15		3		3	
Javelin	22	2		7	8	2	
Discus	23	13		2	6		
Hammer	24	12	3	6	1		
Weight	24	14	1	1	6		
TOTAL FIELD	227	113	12	35	26	10	5
GRAND TOTAL	371	175	46	41	40	15	10

What does this table teach us about athletics in general and British athletics in particular? We learn quite clearly of the predominance of Anglo-American athletics, and this is at any rate partially due to the fact that England and America got a run (metaphorically speaking) on the other nations. The A.A.A. Championships were inaugurated so long ago as 1866, and the American Championships ten years later. We ascertain next that there is a predominance on the part of Great Britain in running events, and that, although she takes second place to America when all the track events are added together, in the fifteen hundred metres (somewhat less than a mile) she is superior to the rest of the world (America included).

I make the definite suggestion that this country has shown and will continue to show that she predominates in mile running.

As a matter of fact, this is exactly what one would expect. It will be noticed that Finland is the only country which has challenged our supremacy in middle or long distance running—and I make bold to say that the natural ability of the Finns has shown itself and will continue to show itself in the longer distances.

Consider for a moment what is required of a man in the performance of a field event as opposed to, say, running a mile. In high jumping, for example, he has to train himself to raise his body over a higher bar than his opponents. This purely mechanical and gymnastic experiment can be practised and dress-rehearsed *ad infinitum*, a fact which applies to all field events. Now transfer your attention to running. In a sense all distances up to a quarter-mile (where this is run in strings) are held under conditions similar to those which apply to jumping. A sprinter merely has to run as fast as possible from start to finish, and this is almost true of the quarter-miler. The modern sprinter can and does train himself to cover the distance in the same number of strides each time. I aimed, when training for the Olympic Games, at such an ideal.

Middle-distance running and long-distance

running, on the other hand, introduce for the first time the two elements of tactics and judgment. A man competing in a mile race must have a knowledge of pace, his own and that of his opponents. He must run the race best suited to his particular attributes; must avoid getting shut in, passing men on corners, running on the outside, making his effort too soon or too late.

Herein lies the opportunity for that typically British attribute, adaptability. The English runner is seldom a machine; he is peculiarly attracted by situations which demand an act of definite volition as opposed to a somewhat stereotyped and automatic venture. Hence his adaptability to distance running. The average Englishman abhors scientific training, and thence in those events which require least—though not no—training (or rather scientific instruction) he tends to succeed. Gradually more and more events are becoming highly specialized, and if this process expands and the same monotonous regularity intrudes into distance running—if, for example, the half-mile should one day be run in strings—we may then expect to see our athletes eclipsed in middle-distance running also.

D. G. A. Lowe,

winner of the Olympic 800 metres, 1924. Lowe in all probability will prove himself the best English half-miler of all time.

Photo: Sport & General.

I make a further point. Just as different nations display different degrees of efficiency in different types of work, and just as oranges can be grown freely in California and not in Catford, so I believe athletes with a natural aptitude for different events are born in different countries. Finland has produced many fine distance runners, Ireland has produced long and high jumpers, and so on. Following out this line of reasoning, I come to the conclusion that our strength lies in half-miling and miling.

If we examine the results of the contests between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge on the one hand and Harvard and Yale on the other, we find that results present themselves in support of this contention. The two great English Universities have met Harvard and Yale on seven occasions, extending over a period of some twenty-seven years. The table on this page illustrates the position.

The general indication from this table is much the same. The American Universities have established an undoubted superiority in the field events, and Oxford and Cambridge have demonstrated a clear advantage on the flat. The table is significant because it is reasonable to suggest that the material available and the type of man from which it is drawn are much the same in each country. More remarkable still, we find that the American Universities have never yet been successful in the mile race, and, indeed, have only secured second place in this race on one occasion. In the half-mile, too, they have but two first and three second places to their credit. In the two contests which Oxford and Cambridge have had against two other great American Universities—those of Princeton and Cornell—we find that the Americans have not been

	TRACK.		FIELD.		TOTAL.	
	First Places.	Second Places.	First Places.	Second Places.	First Places.	Second Places.
Oxford and Cambridge	24	23	6½	12	30½	35
Harvard and Yale.....	13	14	26½	21	39½	35

successful in either the half-mile or the mile.

Up to this, then, we have found that our hypothesis as to British superiority in middle-distance events is reasonably well substantiated by the evidence which we have investigated, and I shall conclude by examining two further pieces of evidence, neither of which would of itself be very impressive, but which, when taken with those we have previously considered, bring some corroboration.

Every year some sixty or more men from the United States of America and from the British Dominions are selected to Rhodes Scholarships at the University of Oxford. One of the bases on which such elections are made is "physical vigour as shown by interest in outdoor sports and other ways." In these circumstances it is not surprising to find that a very large proportion of these scholars obtain Blues in different events.

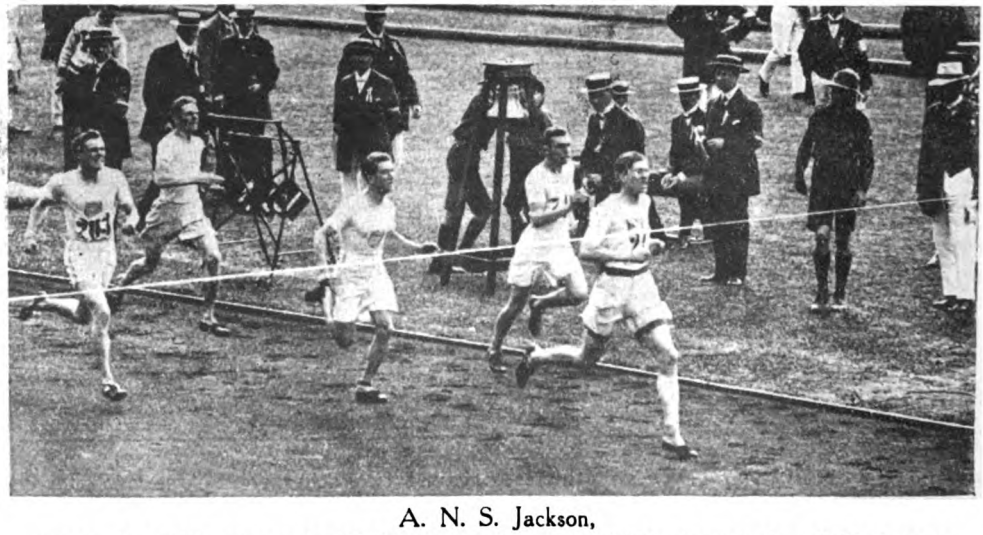
Athletics is no exception. Since the war some sixty-three American and Dominion athletes have won positions in the Oxford team. This represents an average of nine per year—well-nigh half the Oxford team. Nevertheless, on further analysis, we find that only three athletes (one of whom was born in England) have obtained Blues in the half-mile, and not one has obtained a position in the mile or three miles. Two-thirds of the representations were in the field events.

H. B. Stallard,

the A.A.A. one-mile (1923), half-mile (1924), quarter-mile (1925) champion. Stallard is the first man to hold all three championships.

Photo: Sport & General.

We come as a last investigation to the results of the Amateur Athletic Association Championships which have been held annually (barring the years 1915-1918) since 1866. To these championships, which are open to amateur athletes the whole world over, many runners and field-events performers come from abroad. We find that over this period of sixty years forty-four track championships out of three hundred and fifty have gone abroad, and the corresponding totals in field events are eighty-five out of three hundred and seventy-five. Yet throughout this long period the mile has only been wrested from us on four occasions. Since the war there have been one hundred and thirty-three



A. N. S. Jackson,

winner of the 1,500 metres in the 1912 Olympic Games—the one British victory in the individual events

championships, and of the fifty-five that have left our shores the invaders have only annexed the half-mile and the mile each on two occasions.

These figures include the 1926 A.A.A. Championships, in which a German, Dr. Peltzer, won the half-mile in world record time and a Frenchman annexed the mile.

Our inquiry has, I think, established that this country can claim predominance in middle-distance running. It is not very difficult to find an explanation. It is suggested that the Britisher has a great natural ability for all games, and this is borne out by the fact that we have invented so many sports. Middle-distance running is racing at a distance in which natural ability is more the deciding factor than specialized training. This does not hold good in sprinting or any of the field events, where, although the innate potentiality is in the final analysis the deciding factor, it is to concentrated effort and lengthy preparation that we must look for the attainment of proficiency. This undoubtedly accounts for the overwhelming success of the United States in field events, the American character being admirably suited to making a real business of athletics, whereas the lazy, happy-go-lucky English temperament is reluctant to bother whether it is successful or not.

H. M. Abrahams

winning the 100 metres at Paris in 1924—the first time an Englishman has won this event in the Olympic Games.

Photo: Topical Press.

It is dangerous to prophesy, and in some matters it is expensive, but perhaps I may be allowed to indulge in extravagances in this direction. I incline to the belief that as time goes on each of the individual athletic events will become more and more specialized. Should this happen and the principle extend to the distance events as well, so that the middle-distance runner becomes an automaton (as the sprinter is now), then, unless we adopt such methods as those in which our foreign friends see fit to indulge, we shall undoubtedly lose our supremacy in these events also.

This is an age of specialization, and rightly or wrongly, from the moral point of view, the spread of athletics throughout the world has resulted in the production of armies of specialists. The athletes of this country must recognize the fact that international championships of the twentieth century can only fall to those who, gifted with great potentialities, are prepared to leave no stone unturned in their development.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

824.—DIGITAL PUZZLE.

FIND those numbers, composed of three different digits, such that each is divisible by the square of the sum of those digits. Thus in the case of 112, the digits sum to 4, the square of each is 16, and 112 can be divided by 16 without remainder, but unfortunately 112 does not contain three *different* digits.

Can you find all the possible answers?

825.—SUBSCRIPTION PUZZLE.

SEVEN men agreed to subscribe towards a certain fund and the first six gave £10 each. The other man gave £3 more than the average of the seven. What amount did the seventh man subscribe?

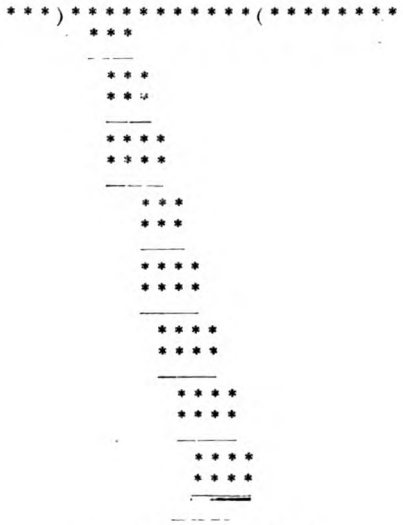
826.—AN ABSOLUTE SKELETON.

REFERRING to some remarks of mine a short time ago on the difficulty of constructing one of these skeletons without giving a single figure, I should perhaps have pointed out that there is no difficulty if you have a sufficient number of other conditions, for, of course, it is a poor puzzle if it is practically impossible of solution except by very laborious trials. I have received from Mr. P. B. Flynn the following interesting case. The only conditions are:—

(1) No digit appears twice in any row of figures except in the dividend.

(2) If 2 be added to the last figure in the quotient it equals the last but one, and if 2 be added to the

third figure from the end it gives the last figure but three in the quotient. That is to say, the quotient might end in (say) 9,742 or in 3,186. I have only succeeded in finding a single solution.



827.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

OFTEN talk'd of, never seen;
Ever coming, never been;
Daily looked for, never here.
Still approaching in the rear.
Thousands for my presence wait,
But, alas! such is my fate,
Tho' expected to appear,
They will never see me here.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

819.—THE ENTANGLED SCISSORS.

THE puzzle is solved by working that loop, which I showed at the bottom of the figure, backwards along the double cord. If you allow, as I hinted was necessary, sufficient length of string, you first slacken it throughout, so as to bring the scissors near the hand of the person holding the ends. You must be careful to make the loop follow the double cord on its course, in and out, until that loop is got free of the scissors. Then, you pass the loop right round the points of the scissors and follow the double cord backwards. The string will then (if you have been very careful) detach itself from the scissors. But it is of the first importance to avoid twists and tangles, or you will get it in a hopeless muddle. I have just accomplished the little feat myself, but I confess that I did not succeed at the first attempt. In fact, it is not at all easy to avoid those twists and tangles.

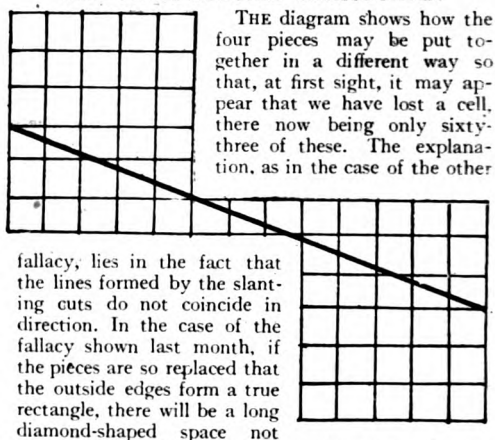
820.—GEOMETRICAL PROGRESSION.

$1 + 3 + 9 + 27 + 81 = 121 = 11^2$ and
$1 + 7 + 49 + 343 = 400 = 20^2$.

821.—THE PUZZLE OF THE ICEMAN.

THE following words appear in the order given: SOLSTICE, AVARICE, ARTIFICE, NOTICE, OFFICE, EDIFICE, MALICE, SERVICE, CHOICE, PREJUDICE, OFFICE, PRACTICE, POULTICE, JUSTICE, CORNICE, LATTICE, ACCOMPLICE, VICE, DICE, RICE, SURPLICE, MICE, JUICE, PUMICE, COPPICE, SPLICE, DENTIFRICE, BODICE, PRICE, SUFFICE, CAPRICE, POLICE, ADVICE, DEVICE, CREVICE, and PRECIPICE.

822.—THE DISSECTED CHESSBOARD.

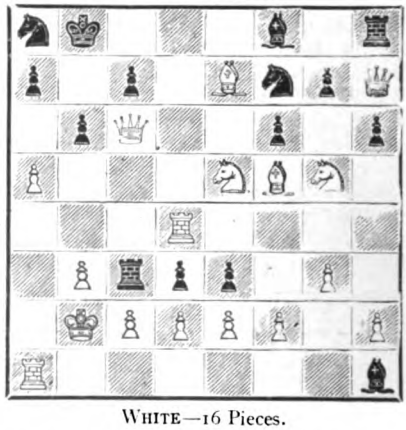


THE diagram shows how the four pieces may be put together in a different way so that, at first sight, it may appear that we have lost a cell, there now being only sixty-three of these. The explanation, as in the case of the other fallacy, lies in the fact that the lines formed by the slanting cuts do not coincide in direction. In the case of the fallacy shown last month, if the pieces are so replaced that the outside edges form a true rectangle, there will be a long diamond-shaped space not covered, exactly equal in area to the supposed extra cell. In this case, the pieces if truly laid, will overlap and the area of the overlapping is exactly equal to the supposed missing cell. That is the simple explanation in a nutshell.

823.—MAXIMUM MOVES IN CHESS.

THE diagram shows a position that might easily arise in a game. As no captures have been made, no pawn has left its own file and all the pieces might clearly have got into the present position. There are here exactly ninety moves available for White, as follows: K 5, Q 19, KR 12, QR 10, KB 9, QB 7, KKt 6, QKt 7, QRP 2, QKtP 1, QBP 3, QP 2, KP 1, KBP 3, KKtP 1, KRP 2—90 in all. I am wondering whether it is possible to reach as many as a hundred under the conditions. Undoubtedly 90 is itself a surprisingly high number. I was marooned five hundred miles from home during the general strike with enforced leisure, and this is one of the problems I set myself, though I had no chessboard to help. I have not since attempted to beat my record.

BLACK—16 Pieces.



WHITE—16 Pieces.

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for November, 1926.

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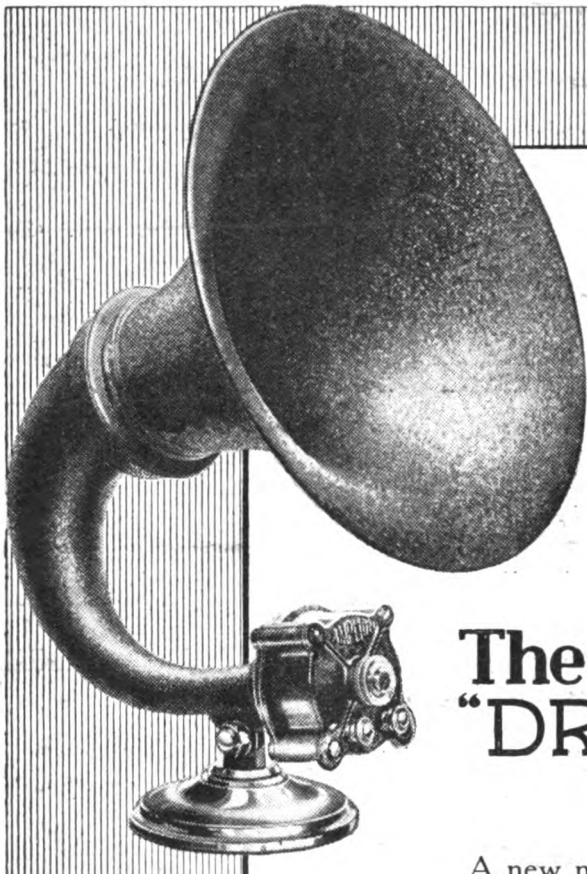

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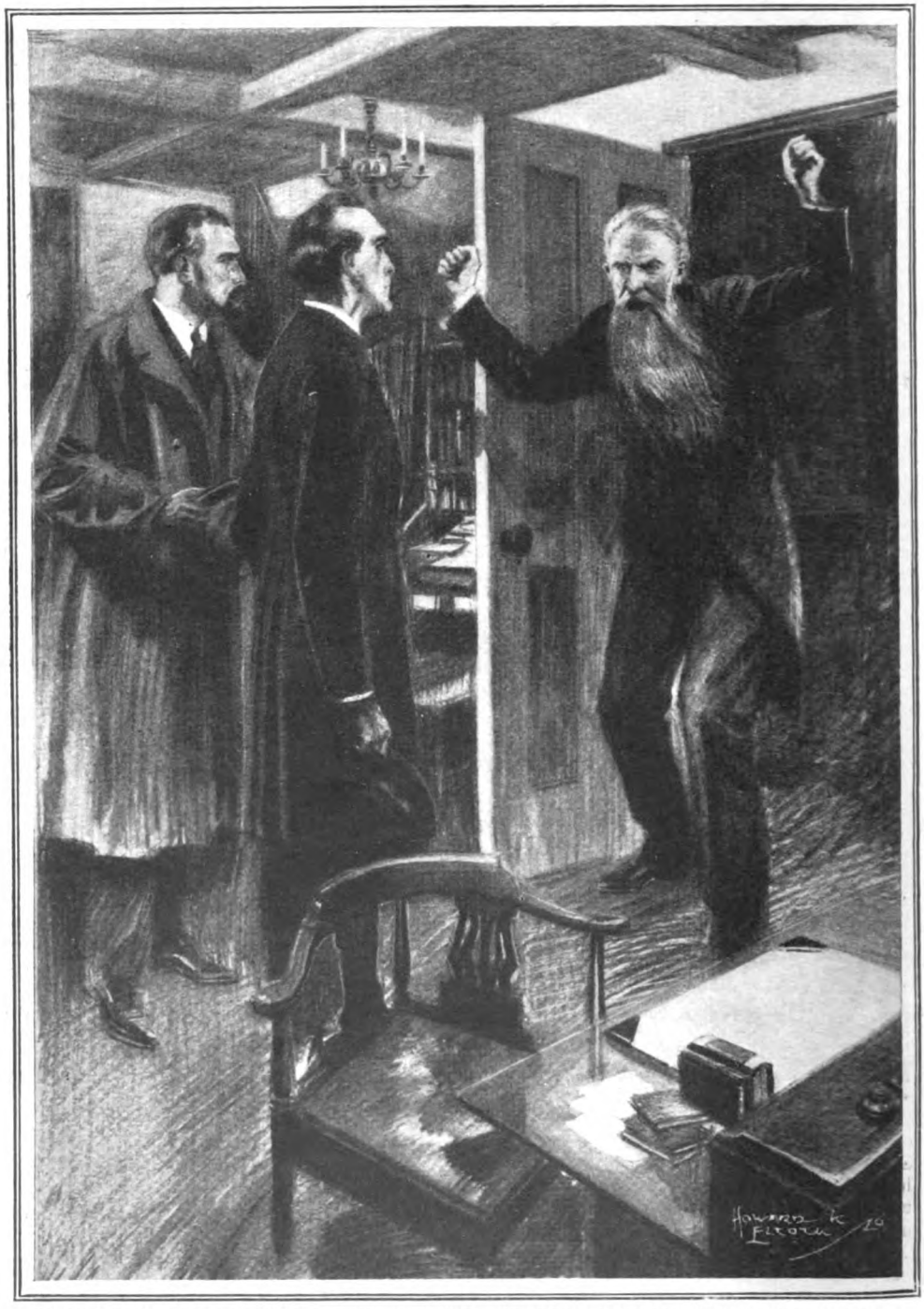

THE DOOR WAS FLUNG OPEN AND HE RUSHED IN WITH BRISTLING BEARD AND TWISTED FEATURES, AS TERRIBLE AN OLD MAN AS EVER I HAVE SEEN.

(See page 431.)

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLANCHED SOLDIER

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

BY

A. Conan Doyle

Illustrated by
HOWARD K. ELCOCK

THE ideas of my friend Watson, though limited, are exceedingly pertinacious. For a long time he has worried me to write an experience of my own. Perhaps I have rather invited this persecution, since I have often had occasion to point out to him how superficial are his own accounts and to accuse him of pandering to popular taste instead of confining himself rigidly to facts and figures. "Try it yourself, Holmes!" he has retorted, and I am compelled to admit that, having taken my pen in my hand, I do begin to realize that the matter must be presented in such a way as may interest the reader. The following case can hardly fail to do so, as it is among the strangest happenings in my collection, though it chanced that Watson had no note of it in his collection. Speaking of my old friend and biographer, I would take this opportunity to remark that if I burden myself with a companion in my various little inquiries it is not done out of sentiment or caprice, but it is that Watson has some remarkable characteristics of his own, to which in his modesty he has given small attention amid his exaggerated estimates of my own performances. A confederate who foresees your conclusions and course of action is always dangerous, but one to whom each development comes as a perpetual surprise, and to whom the future is always a closed book, is, indeed, an ideal helpmate.

This is the first Adventure ever related by Sherlock Holmes himself.

I find from my notebook that it was in January, 1903, just after the conclusion of the Boer War, that I had my visit from Mr. James M. Dodd, a big, fresh, sunburned, upstanding Briton. The good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife, the only selfish action which I can recall in our association. I was alone.

It is my habit to sit with my back to the window and to place my visitors in the opposite chair, where the light falls full upon them. Mr. James M. Dodd seemed somewhat at a loss how to begin the interview. I did not attempt to help him, for his silence gave me more time for observation. I have found it wise to impress clients with a sense of power, and so I gave him some of my conclusions.

"From South Africa, sir, I perceive."

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"Yes, sir," he answered, with some surprise.

"Imperial Yeomanry, I fancy."

"Exactly."

"Middlesex Corps, no doubt."

"That is so. Mr. Holmes, you are a wizard."

I smiled at his bewildered expression.

"When a gentleman of virile appearance enters my room with such tan upon his face as an English sun could never give, and with his handkerchief in his sleeve instead of in his pocket, it is not difficult to place him. You wear a short beard, which shows that you were not a regular. You have the cut of a riding-man. As to Middlesex, your card has already shown me that you are a stock-broker from Throgmorton Street. What other regiment would you join?"

"You see everything."

"I see no more than you, but I have trained myself to notice what I see. However, Mr. Dodd, it was not to discuss the science of observation that you called upon me this morning. What has been happening at Tuxbury Old Park?"

"Mr. Holmes——!"

"My dear sir, there is no mystery. Your letter came with that heading, and as you fixed this appointment in very pressing terms, it was clear that something sudden and important had occurred."

"Yes, indeed. But the letter was written in the afternoon, and a good deal has happened since then. If Colonel Emsworth had not kicked me out——"

"Kicked you out!"

"Well, that was what it amounted to. He is a hard nail, is Colonel Emsworth. The greatest martinet in the Army in his day, and it was a day of rough language, too. I couldn't have stuck the Colonel if it had not been for Godfrey's sake."

I lit my pipe and leaned back in my chair.

"Perhaps you will explain what you are talking about."

My client grinned mischievously.

"I had got into the way of supposing that you knew everything without being told," said he. "But I will give you the facts, and I hope to God that you will be able to tell me what they mean. I've been awake all night puzzling my brain, and the more I think the more incredible does it become.

"When I joined up in January, 1901, —just two years ago—young Godfrey Emsworth had joined the same squadron. He was Colonel Emsworth's only son—Emsworth, the Crimean V.C.—and he had the fighting blood in him, so it is no wonder he volunteered. There was not a finer lad in the regiment. We formed a friendship—the sort of friendship which can only be made when one lives the same life and shares the same joys and sorrows. He was my mate —and that means a good deal in the Army. We took the rough and the smooth together for a year of hard fighting. Then he was hit with a bullet from an elephant gun in the action near Diamond Hill outside Pretoria. I got one letter from the hospital at Cape Town and one from Southampton. Since then not a word—not one word, Mr. Holmes, for six months and more, and he my closest pal.

"Well, when the war was over, and we all got back, I wrote to his father and asked where Godfrey was. No answer. I waited a bit and then I wrote again. This time I had a reply, short and gruff. Godfrey had gone on a voyage round the world, and it was not likely that he would be back for a year. That was all.

"I wasn't satisfied, Mr. Holmes. The whole thing seemed to me so damned unnatural. He was a good lad and he would not drop a pal like that. It was not like him. Then, again, I happened to know that he was heir to a lot of money, and also that his father and he did not always hit it off too well. The old man was sometimes a bully, and young Godfrey had too much spirit to stand it. No, I wasn't satisfied, and I determined that I would get to the root of the matter. It happened, however, that my own affairs needed a lot of straightening out, after two years' absence, and so it is only this week that I have been able to take up Godfrey's case again. But since I have taken it up I mean to drop everything in order to see it through."

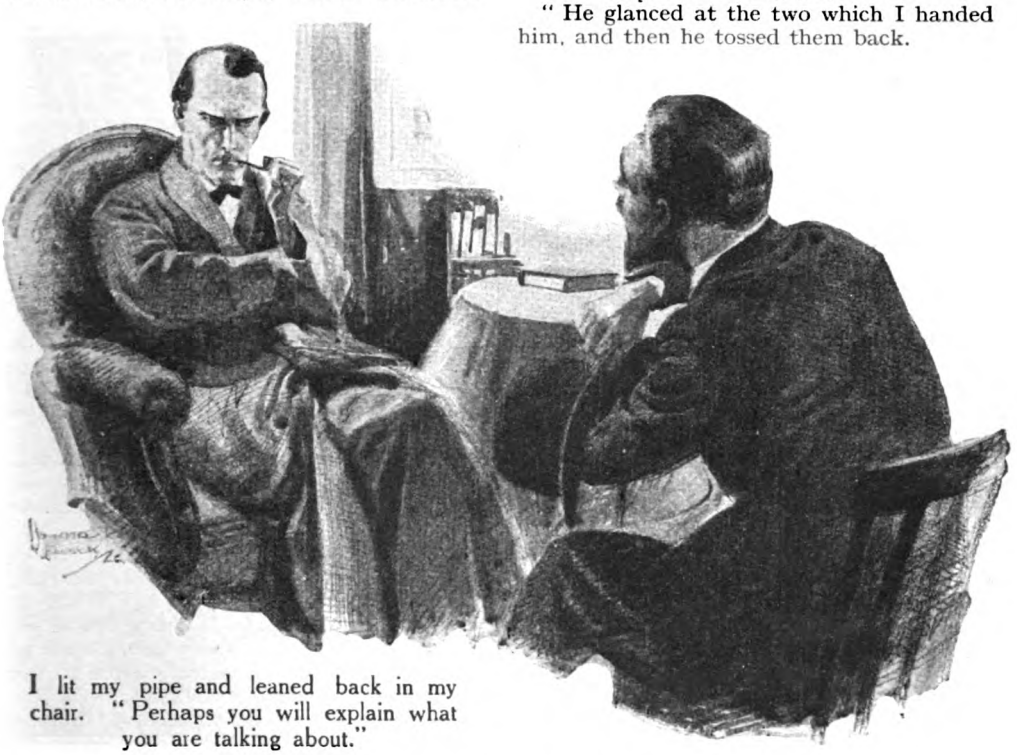
MR. JAMES M. DODD appeared to be the sort of person whom it would be better to have as a friend than as an enemy. His blue eyes were stern and his square jaw had set hard as he spoke.

"Well, what have you done?" I asked.

"My first move was to get down to his home, Tuxbury Old Park, near Bedford, and to see for myself how the ground lay. I wrote to the mother, therefore—I had had quite enough of the curmudgeon of a father —and I made a clean frontal attack: Godfrey was my chum, I had a great deal of interest which I might tell her of our common experiences, I should be in the neighbourhood, would there be any objection, etcetera? In reply I had quite an amiable answer from her and an offer to put me up for the night. That was what took me down on Monday.

"Tuxbury Old Hall is inaccessible—five miles from anywhere. There was no trap at the station, so I had to walk, carrying my suit-case, and it was nearly dark before I arrived. It is a great wandering house, standing in a considerable park. I should

judge it was of all sorts of ages and styles, starting on a half-timbered Elizabethan foundation and ending in a Victorian portico. Inside it was all panelling and tapestry and half-effaced old pictures, a house of shadows and mystery. There was a butler, old Ralph, who seemed about



I lit my pipe and leaned back in my chair. "Perhaps you will explain what you are talking about."

the same age as the house, and there was his wife, who might have been older. She had been Godfrey's nurse, and I had heard him speak of her as second only to his mother in his affections, so I was drawn to her in spite of her queer appearance. The mother I liked also—a gentle little white mouse of a woman. It was only the Colonel himself whom I barred.

"We had a bit of a barney right away, and I should have walked back to the station if I had not felt that it might be playing his game for me to do so. I was shown straight into his study, and there I found him, a huge, bow-backed man with a smoky skin and a straggling grey beard, seated behind his littered desk. A red-veined nose jutted out like a vulture's beak, and two fierce grey eyes glared at me from under tufted brows. I could understand now why Godfrey seldom spoke of his father.

"'Well, sir,' said he in a rasping voice. 'I should be interested to know the real reasons for this visit.'

"I answered that I had explained them in my letter to his wife.

"'Yes, yes; you said that you had known Godfrey in Africa. We have, of course, only your word for that.'

"'I have his letters to me in my pocket.'

"'Kindly let me see them.'

"He glanced at the two which I handed him, and then he tossed them back.

"'Well, what then?' he asked.

"'I was fond of your son Godfrey, sir. Many ties and memories united us. Is it not natural that I should wonder at his sudden silence and should wish to know what has become of him?'

"'I have some recollection, sir, that I had already corresponded with you and had told you what had become of him. He has gone upon a voyage round the world. His health was in a poor way after his African experiences, and both his mother and I were of opinion that complete rest and change were needed. Kindly pass that explanation on to any other friends who may be interested in the matter.'

"'Certainly,' I answered. 'But perhaps you would have the goodness to let me have the name of the steamer and of the line by which he sailed, together with the date. I have no doubt that I should be able to get a letter through to him.'

"My request seemed both to puzzle and to irritate my host. His great eyebrows

came down over his eyes and he tapped his fingers impatiently on the table. He looked up at last with the expression of one who has seen his adversary make a dangerous move at chess, and has decided how to meet it.

"'Many people, Mr. Dodd,' said he, 'would take offence at your infernal pertinacity and would think that this insistence had reached the point of damned impertinence.'

"'You must put it down, sir, to my real love for your son.'

"'Exactly. I have already made every allowance upon that score. I must ask you, however, to drop these inquiries. Every family has its own inner knowledge and its own motives, which cannot always be made clear to outsiders, however well-intentioned. My wife is anxious to hear something of Godfrey's past which you are in a position to tell her, but I would ask you to let the present and the future alone. Such inquiries serve no useful purpose, sir, and place us in a delicate and difficult position.'

"SO I came to a dead end, Mr. Holmes. There was no getting past it. I could only pretend to accept the situation and register a vow inwardly that I would never rest until my friend's fate had been cleared up. It was a dull evening. We dined quietly, the three of us, in a gloomy, faded old room. The lady questioned me eagerly about her son, but the old man seemed morose and depressed. I was so bored by the whole proceeding that I made an excuse as soon as I decently could and retired to my bedroom. It was a large, bare room on the ground floor, as gloomy as the rest of the house, but after a year of sleeping upon the veldt, Mr. Holmes, one is not too particular about one's quarters. I opened the curtains and looked out into the garden, remarking that it was a fine night with a bright half-moon. Then I sat down by the roaring fire with the lamp on a table beside me, and endeavoured to distract my mind with a novel. I was interrupted, however, by Ralph, the old butler, who came in with a fresh supply of coals.

"'I thought you might run short in the night-time, sir. It is bitter weather and these rooms are cold.'

"He hesitated before leaving the room, and when I looked round he was standing facing me with a wistful look upon his wrinkled face.

"'Beg your pardon, sir, but I could not help hearing what you said of young Master Godfrey at dinner. You know, sir, that my wife nursed him, and so I may say I am his foster-father. It's natural we should take an interest. And you say he carried himself well, sir?'

"'There was no braver man in the regiment. He pulled me out once from under the rifles of the Boers, or maybe I should not be here.'

"The old butler rubbed his skinny hands.

"'Yes, sir, yes, that is Master Godfrey all over. He was always courageous. There's not a tree in the park, sir, that he has not climbed. Nothing would stop him. He was a fine boy—and oh, sir, he was a fine man.'

"I sprang to my feet.

"'Look here!' I cried. 'You say he *was*. You speak as if he were dead. What is all this mystery? What has become of Godfrey Emsworth?'

"I gripped the old man by the shoulder, but he shrank away.

"'I don't know what you mean, sir. Ask the master about Master Godfrey. He knows. It is not for me to interfere.'

"He was leaving the room, but I held his arm.

"'Listen,' I said. 'You are going to answer one question before you leave if I have to hold you all night. Is Godfrey dead?'

"He could not face my eyes. He was like a man hypnotized. The answer was dragged from his lips. It was a terrible and unexpected one.

"'I wish to God he was!' he cried. and, tearing himself free, he dashed from the room.

"You will think, Mr. Holmes, that I returned to my chair in no very happy state of mind. The old man's words seemed to me to bear only one interpretation. Clearly my poor friend had become involved in some criminal, or, at the least, disreputable, transaction which touched the family honour. That stern old man had sent his son away and hidden him from the world lest some scandal should come to light. Godfrey was a reckless fellow. He was easily influenced by those around him. No doubt he had fallen into bad hands and been misled to his ruin. It was a piteous business, if it was indeed so, but even now it was my duty to hunt him out and see if I could aid him. I was anxiously pondering the matter when I looked up, and there was Godfrey Emsworth standing before me."

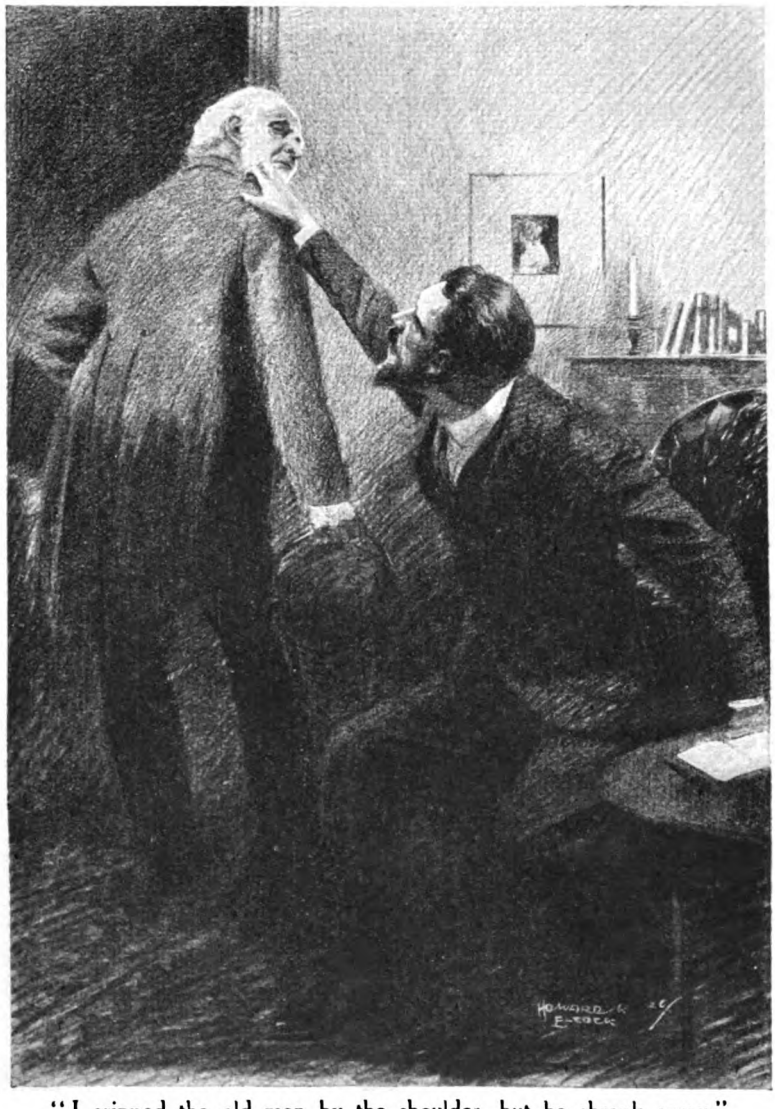
MY client had paused as one in deep emotion.

"Pray continue," I said. "Your problem presents some very unusual features."

"He was outside the window, Mr. Holmes, with his face pressed against the glass. I have told you that I looked out at the night. When I did so, I left the curtains partly open. His figure was framed in this gap. The window came down to the ground

and I could see the whole length of it, but it was his face which held my gaze. He was deadly pale—never have I seen a man so white. I reckon ghosts may look like that; but his eyes met mine, and they were the eyes of a living man. He sprang back when he saw that I was looking at him, and he vanished into the darkness.

"There was something shocking about the man, Mr. Holmes. It wasn't merely that ghastly face glimmering as white as cheese in the darkness. It was more subtle than that—something slinking, something furtive, something guilty—something very unlike the frank, manly lad that I had known. It left a feeling of horror in my mind.



"I gripped the old man by the shoulder, but he shrank away."

"But when a man has been soldiering for a year or two with brother Boer as a playmate, he keeps his nerve and acts quickly. Godfrey had hardly vanished before I was at the window. There was an awkward catch, and it was some little time before I could open it. Then I nipped through and ran down the garden path in the direction that I thought he might have taken.

"It was a long path and the light was not very good, but it seemed to me something was moving ahead of me. I ran on and called his name, but it was no use. When I got to the end of the path, there were several others branching in different directions to various outhouses. I stood hesitating, and as I did so I heard distinctly the sound of a closing door. It was not behind me in the house, but ahead of me, somewhere in the darkness. That was enough, Mr. Holmes, to assure me that what I had seen was not a vision. Godfrey had run away from me and he had shut a door behind him. Of that I was certain.

"There was nothing more I could do, and I spent an uneasy night turning the matter over in my mind and trying to find some theory which would cover the facts. Next day I found the Colonel rather more conciliatory, and as his wife remarked that there were some places of interest in the

neighbourhood, it gave me an opening to ask whether my presence for one more night would incommode them. A somewhat grudging acquiescence from the old man gave me a clear day in which to make my observations. I was already perfectly convinced that Godfrey was in hiding somewhere near, but where and why remained to be solved.

"The house was so large and so rambling that a regiment might be hid away in it and no one the wiser. If the secret lay there, it was difficult for me to penetrate it. But the door which I had heard close was certainly not in the house. I must explore the garden and see what I could find. There was no difficulty in the way, for the old people were busy in their own fashion and left me to my own devices.

"There were several small outhouses, but at the end of the garden there was a detached building of some size—large enough for a gardener's or a gamekeeper's residence. Could this be the place whence the sound of that shutting door had come? I approached it in a careless fashion, as though I were strolling aimlessly round the grounds. As I did so, a small, brisk, bearded man in a black coat and bowler hat—not at all the gardener type—came out of the door. To my surprise, he locked it after him and put the key in his pocket. Then he looked at me with some surprise on his face.

"'Are you a visitor here?' he asked.

"I explained that I was and that I was a friend of Godfrey's.

"'What a pity that he should be away on his travels, for he would have so liked to see me,' I continued.

"'Quite so. Exactly,' said he, with a rather guilty air. 'No doubt you will renew your visit at some more propitious time.' He passed on, but when I turned I observed that he was standing watching me, half-concealed by the laurels at the far end of the garden.

"I HAD a good look at the little house as I passed it, but the windows were heavily curtained, and, so far as one could see, it was empty. I might spoil my own game, and even be ordered off the premises, if I were too audacious, for I was still conscious that I was being watched. Therefore, I strolled back to the house and waited for night before I went on with my inquiry. When all was dark and quiet, I slipped out of my window and made my way as silently as possible to the mysterious lodge.

"I have said that it was heavily curtained, but now I found that the windows were shuttered as well. Some light, however, was breaking through one of them, so I concentrated my attention upon this. I was in luck, for the curtain had not been quite closed, and there was a crack in the shutter so that I could see the inside of the room. It was a cheery place enough, a bright lamp and a blazing fire. Opposite to me was seated the little man whom I had seen in the morning. He was smoking a pipe and reading a paper."

"What paper?" I asked.

My client seemed annoyed at the interruption of his narrative.

"Can it matter?" he asked.

"It is most essential."

"I really took no notice."

"Possibly you observed whether it was a broad-leafed paper or of that smaller type which one associates with weeklies."

"Now that you mention it, it was not large. It might have been *The Spectator*. However, I had little thought to spare upon such details, for a second man was seated with his back to the window, and I could swear that this second man was Godfrey. I could not see his face, but I knew the familiar slope of his shoulders. He was leaning upon his elbow in an attitude of great melancholy, his body turned towards the fire. I was hesitating as to what I should do when there was a sharp tap on my shoulder, and there was Colonel Emsworth beside me.

"'This way, sir!' said he in a low voice. He walked in silence to the house and I followed him into my own bedroom. He had picked up a time-table in the hall.

"'There is a train to London at eight-thirty,' said he. 'The trap will be at the door at eight.'

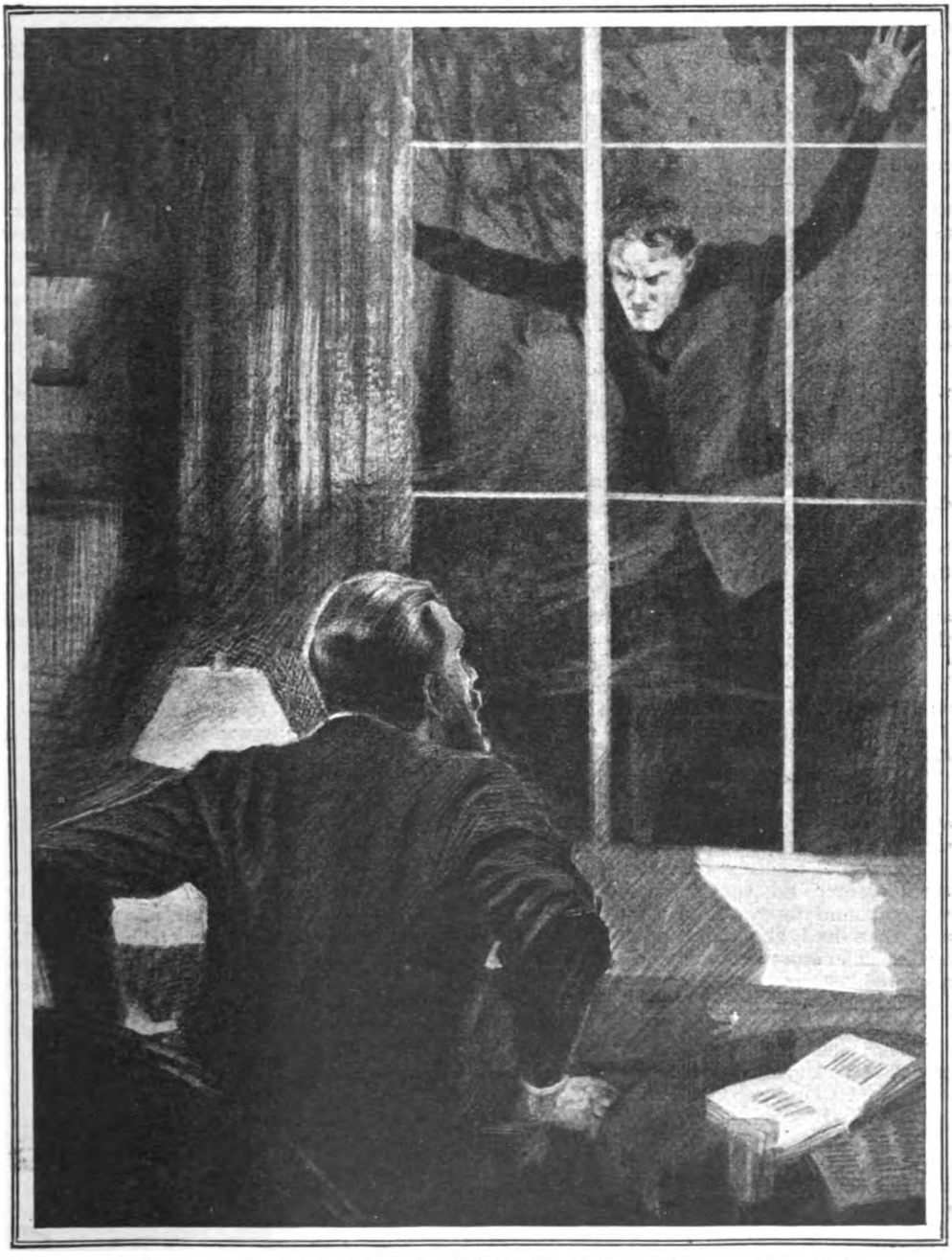
"He was white with rage, and, indeed, I felt myself in so difficult a position that I could only stammer out a few incoherent apologies, in which I tried to excuse myself by urging my anxiety for my friend.

"'The matter will not bear discussion,' said he, abruptly. 'You have made a most damnable intrusion into the privacy of our family. You were here as a guest and you have become a spy. I have nothing more to say, sir, save that I have no wish ever to see you again.'

"At this I lost my temper, Mr. Holmes, and I spoke with some warmth.

"'I have seen your son, and I am convinced that for some reason of your own you are concealing him from the world. I have no idea what your motives are in cutting him off in this fashion, but I am sure that he is no longer a free agent. I warn you, Colonel Emsworth, that until I am assured as to the safety and well-being of my friend I shall never desist in my efforts to get to the bottom of the mystery, and I shall certainly not allow myself to be intimidated by anything which you may say or do.'

"The old fellow looked diabolical, and I really thought he was about to attack me.



"He sprang back when he saw that I was looking at him and vanished into the darkness."

I have said that he was a gaunt, fierce old giant, and though I am no weakling I might have been hard put to it to hold my own against him. However, after a long glare of rage he turned upon his heel and walked out of the room. For my part, I took the appointed train in the morning, with the full intention of coming straight to you and

asking for your advice and assistance at the appointment for which I had already written."

SUCH was the problem which my visitor laid before me. It presented, as the astute reader will have already perceived, few difficulties in its solution, for a very limited choice of alternatives must get to the root of the matter. Still, elementary as it was, there were points of interest and novelty about it which may excuse my placing it upon record. I now proceeded, using my familiar method of logical analysis, to narrow down the possible solutions.

"The servants," I asked; "how many were in the house?"

"To the best of my belief there were only the old butler and his wife. They seemed to live in the simplest fashion."

"There was no servant, then, in the detached house?"

"None, unless the little man with the beard acted as such. He seemed, however, to be quite a superior person."

"That seems very suggestive. Had you any indication that food was conveyed from the one house to the other?"

"Now that you mention it, I did see old Ralph carrying a basket down the garden walk and going in the direction of this house. The idea of food did not occur to me at the moment."

"Did you make any local inquiries?"

"Yes, I did. I spoke to the station-master and also to the innkeeper in the village. I simply asked if they knew anything of my old comrade, Godfrey Emsworth. Both of them assured me that he had gone for a voyage round the world. He had come home and then had almost at once started off again. The story was evidently universally accepted."

"You said nothing of your suspicions?"

"Nothing."

"That was very wise. The matter should certainly be inquired into. I will go back with you to Tuxbury Old Park."

"To-day?"

It happened that at the moment I was clearing up the case which my friend Watson has described as that of the Abbey School, in which the Duke of Greyminster was so deeply involved. I had also a commission from the Sultan of Turkey which called for immediate action, as political consequences of the gravest kind might arise from its neglect. Therefore it was not until the beginning of the next week, as my diary records, that I was able to start forth on my mission to Bedfordshire in company with Mr. James M. Dodd. As we drove to Euston we picked up a grave and taciturn gentleman of iron-grey aspect, with whom I had made the necessary arrangements.

"This is an old friend," said I to Dodd. "It is possible that his presence may be entirely unnecessary, and, on the other hand, it may be essential. It is not necessary at the present stage to go further into the matter."

The narratives of Watson have accustomed the reader, no doubt, to the fact that I do not waste words or disclose my thoughts while a case is actually under consideration. Dodd seemed surprised, but nothing more was said and the three of us continued our journey together. In the train I asked Dodd one more question which I wished our companion to hear.

"You say that you saw your friend's face quite clearly at the window, so clearly that you are sure of his identity?"

"I have no doubt about it whatever. His nose was pressed against the glass. The lamplight shone full upon him."

"It could not have been someone resembling him?"

"No, no; it was he."

"But you say he was changed?"

"Only in colour. His face was—how shall I describe it?—it was of a fish-belly whiteness. It was bleached."

"Was it equally pale all over?"

"I think not. It was his brow which I saw so clearly as it was pressed against the window."

"Did you call to him?"

"I was too startled and horrified for the moment. Then I pursued him, as I have told you, but without result."

My case was practically complete, and there was only one small incident needed to round it off. When, after a considerable drive, we arrived at the strange old rambling house which my client had described, it was Ralph, the elderly butler, who opened the door. I had requisitioned the carriage for the day and had asked my elderly friend to remain within it unless we should summon him. Ralph, a little, wrinkled old fellow, was in the conventional costume of black coat and pepper-and-salt trousers, with only one curious variant. He wore brown leather gloves, which at sight of us he instantly shuffled off, laying them down on the hall-table as we passed in. I have, as my friend Watson may have remarked, an abnormally acute set of senses, and a faint but incisive scent was apparent. It seemed to centre on the hall-table. I turned, placed my hat there, knocked it off, stooped to pick it up, and contrived to bring my nose within a foot of the gloves. Yes, it was undoubtedly from them that the curious tarry odour was oozing. I passed on into the study with my case complete. Alas, that I should have

to show my hand so when I tell my own story! It was by concealing such links in the chain that Watson was enabled to produce his meretricious finales.

Colonel Emsworth was not in his room, but he came quickly enough on receipt of Ralph's message. We heard his quick, heavy step in the passage. The door was flung open and he rushed in with bristling beard and twisted features, as terrible an old man as ever I have seen. He held our cards in his hand, and he tore them up and stamped on the fragments.

"Have I not told you, you infernal busybody, that you are warned off the premises? Never dare to show your damned face here again. If you enter again without my leave I shall be within my rights if I use violence. I'll shoot you, sir! By God, I will! As to you, sir," turning upon me, "I extend the same warning to you. I am familiar with your ignoble profession, but you must take your reputed talents to some other field. There is no opening for them here."

"I cannot leave here," said my client, firmly, "until I hear from Godfrey's own lips that he is under no restraint."

Our involuntary host rang the bell.

"Ralph," he said, "telephone down to the county police and ask the inspector to send up two constables. Tell him there are burglars in the house."

"One moment," said I. "You must be aware, Mr. Dodd, that Colonel Emsworth is within his rights and that we have no legal status within his house. On the other hand, he should recognize that your action is prompted entirely by solicitude for his son. I venture to hope that, if I were allowed to have five minutes' conversation with Colonel Emsworth, I could certainly alter his view of the matter."

"I am not so easily altered," said the old soldier. "Ralph, do what I have told you. What the devil are you waiting for? Ring up the police!"

"Nothing of the sort," I said, putting my back to the door. "Any police interference would bring about the very catastrophe which you dread." I took out my notebook and scribbled one word upon a loose sheet. "That," said I, as I handed it to Colonel Emsworth, "is what has brought us here."

He stared at the writing with a face from which every expression save amazement had vanished.

"How do you know?" he gasped, sitting down heavily in his chair.

"It is my business to know things. That is my trade."

He sat in deep thought, his gaunt hand tugging at his straggling beard. Then he made a gesture of resignation.

"Well, if you wish to see Godfrey, you shall. It is no doing of mine, but you have forced my hand. Ralph, tell Mr. Godfrey and Mr. Kent that in five minutes we shall be with them."

AT the end of that time we passed down the garden path and found ourselves in front of the mystery house at the end. A small bearded man stood at the door with a look of considerable astonishment upon his face.

"This is very sudden, Colonel Emsworth," said he. "This will disarrange all our plans."

"I can't help it, Mr. Kent. Our hands have been forced. Can Mr. Godfrey see us?"

"Yes; he is waiting inside." He turned and led us into a large, plainly-furnished front room. A man was standing with his back to the fire, and at the sight of him my client sprang forward with outstretched hand.

"Why, Godfrey, old man, this is fine!" But the other waved him back.

"Don't touch me, Jimmie. Keep your distance. Yes, you may well stare! I don't quite look the smart Lance-Corporal Emsworth, of B Squadron, do I?"

His appearance was certainly extraordinary. One could see that he had indeed been a handsome man with clear-cut features sunburned by an African sun, but mottled in patches over this darker surface were curious whitish patches which had bleached his skin.

"That's why I don't court visitors," said he. "I don't mind you, Jimmie, but I could have done without your friend. I suppose there is some good reason for it, but you have me at a disadvantage."

"I wanted to be sure that all was well with you, Godfrey. I saw you that night when you looked into my window, and I could not let the matter rest till I had cleared things up."

"Old Ralph told me you were there, and I couldn't help taking a peep at you. I hoped you would not have seen me, and I had to run to my burrow when I heard the window go up."

"But what in Heaven's name is the matter?"

"Well, it's not a long story to tell," said he, lighting a cigarette. "You remember that morning fight at Buffelsspruit, outside Pretoria, on the Eastern railway line? You heard I was hit?"

"Yes, I heard that, but I never got particulars."

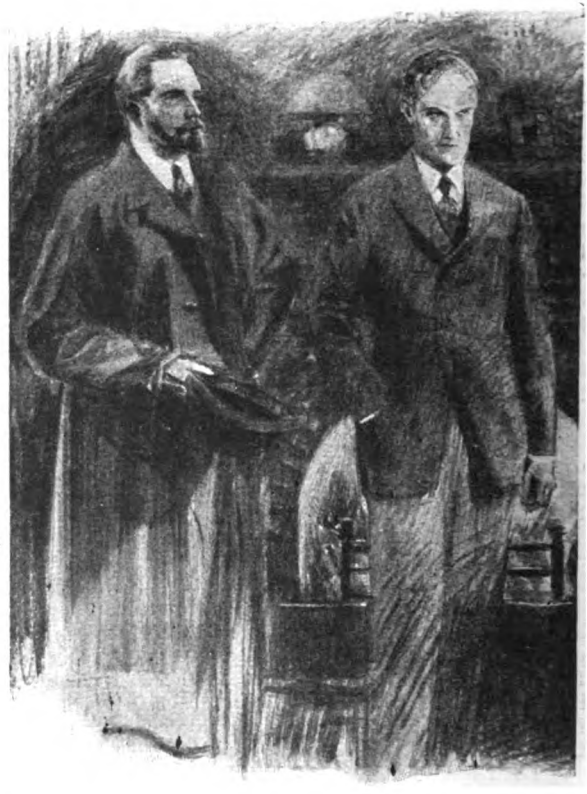
"Three of us got separated from the others. It was very broken country, you may remember. There was Simpson—the

fellow we called Baldy Simpson—and Anderson, and I. We were clearing brother Boer, but he lay low and got the three of us. The other two were killed. I got an elephant bullet through my shoulder. I stuck on to my horse, however, and he galloped several miles before I fainted and rolled off the saddle.

"When I came to myself it was nightfall, and I raised myself up, feeling very weak and ill. To my surprise there was a house close beside me, a fairly large house with a broad stoep and many windows. It was deadly cold. You remember the kind of numb cold which used to come at evening, a deadly, sickening sort of cold, very different from a crisp, healthy frost. Well, I was chilled to the bone, and my only hope seemed to lie in reaching that house. I staggered to my feet and dragged myself along, hardly conscious of what I did. I have a dim memory of slowly ascending the steps, entering a wide-opened door, passing into a large room which contained several beds, and throwing myself down with a gasp of satisfaction upon one of them. It was unmade, but that troubled me not at all. I drew the clothes over my shivering body and in a moment I was in a deep sleep.

"It was morning when I wakened, and it seemed to me that instead of coming out into a world of sanity I had emerged into some extraordinary nightmare. The African sun flooded through the big, curtainless windows, and every detail of the great, bare, whitewashed dormitory stood out hard and clear. In front of me was standing a small, dwarf-like man with a huge, bulbous head, who was jabbering excitedly in Dutch, waving two horrible hands which looked to me like brown sponges. Behind him stood a group of people who seemed to be intensely amused by the situation, but a chill came over me as I looked at them. Not one of them was a normal human being. Every one was twisted or swollen or disfigured in some strange way. The laughter of these strange monstrosities was a dreadful thing to hear.

"It seemed that none of them could speak English, but the situation wanted clearing up, for the creature with the big head was growing furiously angry and, uttering wild beast cries, he had laid his deformed hands upon me and was dragging me out of bed, regardless of the fresh flow of blood from my wound. The little monster was as strong as a bull, and I don't know what he might have done to me had not an elderly man who was clearly in authority been attracted to the room by the hubbub. He



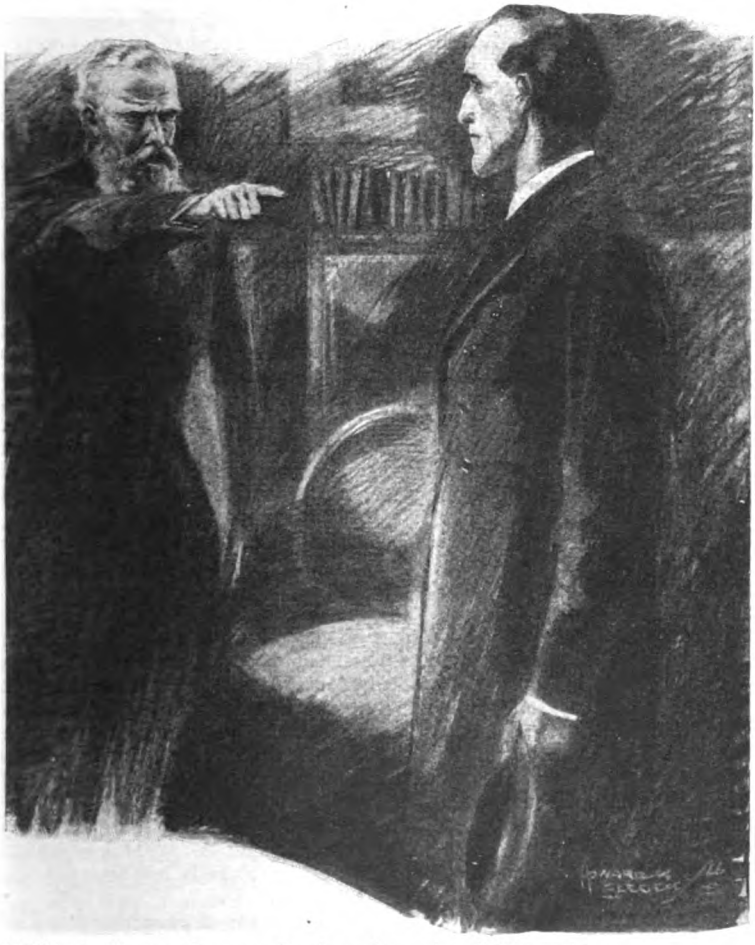
Colonel Emsworth pointed to Sherlock Holmes.

said a few stern words in Dutch and my persecutor shrank away. Then he turned upon me, gazing at me in the utmost amazement.

"'How in the world did you come here?' he asked, in amazement. 'Wait a bit! I see that you are tired out and that wounded shoulder of yours wants looking after. I am a doctor, and I'll soon have you tied up. But, man alive! you are in far greater danger here than ever you were on the battlefield. You are in the Leper Hospital, and you have slept in a leper's bed.'

"Need I tell you more, Jimmie? It seems

that in view of the approaching battle all these poor creatures had been evacuated the day before. Then, as the British advanced, they had been brought back by this, their medical superintendent, who assured me that, though he believed he was immune to the disease, he would none the less never have dared on those lines. The alternative was a dreadful one—segregation for life among strangers with never a hope of release. But absolute secrecy was necessary, or even in this quiet countryside there would have been an outcry, and I should have been dragged to my horrible doom. Even you, Jimmie—even you had to be kept in the dark. Why my father has relented I cannot imagine."



"This is the gentleman who forced my hand," he said.

Colonel Emsworth pointed to me.

"This is the gentleman who forced my hand." He unfolded the scrap of paper on which I had written the word "Leprosy." "It seemed to me that if he knew so much as that it was safer that he should know all."

"And so it was," said I. "Who knows but good may come of it? I understand that only Mr. Kent has seen the patient. May I ask, sir, if you are an authority on such complaints, which are, I understand, tropical or semi-tropical in their nature?"

"I have the ordinary knowledge of the educated medical man," he observed, with some stiffness.

"I have no doubt, sir, that you are fully competent, but I am sure that you will agree that in such a case a second opinion is valuable. You have avoided this, I understand, for fear that pressure should be put upon you to segregate the patient."

"That is so," said Colonel Emsworth.

"I foresaw this situation," I explained, "and I have brought with me a friend whose discretion may absolutely be trusted. I was able once to do him a professional service, and he is ready to advise as a friend rather than as a specialist. His name is Sir James Saunders."

The prospect of an interview with Lord

to do what I had done. He put me in a private room, treated me kindly, and within a week or so I was removed to the general hospital at Pretoria.

"So there you have my tragedy. I hoped against hope, but it was not until I had reached home that the terrible signs which you see upon my face told me that I had not escaped. What was I to do? I was in this lonely house. We had two servants whom we could utterly trust. There was a house where I could live. Under pledge of secrecy, Mr. Kent, who is a surgeon, was prepared to stay with me. It seemed simple enough

Roberts would not have excited greater wonder and pleasure in a raw subaltern than was now reflected upon the face of Mr. Kent.

"I shall indeed be proud," he murmured.

"Then I will ask Sir James to step this way. He is at present in the carriage outside the door. Meanwhile, Colonel Emsworth, we may perhaps assemble in your study, where I could give the necessary explanations."

AND here it is that I miss my Watson. By cunning questions and ejaculations of wonder he could elevate my simple art, which is but systematized common sense, into a prodigy. When I tell my own story I have no such aid. And yet I will give my process of thought even as I gave it to my small audience, which included Godfrey's mother, in the study of Colonel Emsworth.

"That process," said I, "starts upon the supposition that when you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. It may well be that several explanations remain, in which case one tries test after test until one or other of them has a convincing amount of support. We will now apply this principle to the case in point. As it was first presented to me, there were three possible explanations of the seclusion or incarceration of this gentleman in an outhouse of his father's mansion. There was the explanation that he was in hiding for a crime, or that he was mad and that they wished to avoid an asylum, or that he had some disease which caused his segregation. I could think of no other adequate solutions. These, then, had to be sifted and balanced against each other.

"The criminal solution would not bear inspection. No undiscovered crime had been reported from that district. I was sure of that. If it were some crime not yet discovered, then clearly it would be to the interest of the family to get rid of the delinquent and send him abroad rather than keep him concealed at home. I could see no explanation for such a line of conduct.

"Insanity was more plausible. The presence of the second person in the outhouse suggested a keeper. The fact that he locked the door when he came out strengthened the supposition and gave the idea of constraint. On the other hand, this constraint could not be severe or the young man could not have got loose and come down to have a look at his friend. You will remember, Mr. Dodd, that I felt round for points, asking you, for example, about the paper which Mr. Kent was reading. Had it been *The Lancet* or *The British Medical Journal* it would have helped me. It is not illegal, however, to keep a lunatic upon private premises so long as there is a qualified person in attendance and that the authorities have been duly notified. Why, then, all this desperate desire for secrecy? Once again I could not get the theory to fit the facts.

"There remained the third possibility, into which, rare and unlikely as it was, everything seemed to fit. Leprosy is not uncommon in South Africa. By some extraordinary chance this youth might have contracted it. His people would be placed in a very dreadful position, since they would desire to save him from segregation. Great secrecy would be needed to prevent rumours from getting about and subsequent interference by the authorities. A devoted medical man, if sufficiently paid, would easily be found to take charge of the sufferer. There would be no reason why the latter should not be allowed freedom after dark. Bleaching of the skin is a common result of the disease. The case was a strong one—so strong that I determined to act as if it were actually proved. When on arriving here I noticed that Ralph, who carries out the meals, had gloves which are impregnated with disinfectants, my last doubts were removed. A single word showed you, sir, that your secret was discovered, and if I wrote rather than said it, it was to prove to you that my discretion was to be trusted."

I WAS finishing this little analysis of the case when the door was opened and the austere figure of the great dermatologist was ushered in. But for once his sphinx-like features had relaxed and there was a warm humanity in his eyes. He strode up to Colonel Emsworth and shook him by the hand.

"It is often my lot to bring ill-tidings, and seldom good," said he. "This occasion is the more welcome. It is not leprosy."

"What?"

"A well-marked case of pseudo-leprosy or ichthyosis, a scale-like affection of the skin, unsightly, obstinate, but possibly curable, and certainly non-infective. Yes, Mr. Holmes, the coincidence is a remarkable one. But is it coincidence? Are there not subtle forces at work of which we know little? Are we assured that the apprehension, from which this young man has no doubt suffered terribly since his exposure to its contagion, may not produce a physical effect which simulates that which it fears? At any rate, I pledge my professional reputation—— But the lady has fainted! I think that Mr. Kent had better be with her until she recovers from this joyous shock."

(Next month: "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane.")

A CHANGE OF SWORDS

By

EDGAR JEPSON

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

THE heart of Japan was in the sword. However admirable may be the paintings, prints, lacquer, ivories, or bronze, the supreme artistic achievement of Japan was a sword-blade forged by Masamune, Muramasa, Sadamune, or Rai Kunitsugu. A Prince would leave a province to one son and one of these swords to another. The son who had the sword was reckoned the luckier man, and fighting-men would journey a hundred miles to see it.

Little Miss Timmins did not share with the Japanese this passion for the sword. She would buy prints, or lacquer, or ivory, or bronze whenever she could obtain a lot at a price which made it practically certain that she would sell it at a pleasing profit; she would even buy, with the same pleasing profit in view, Japanese sword-guards of strange metals, shakudo, sentoku, and shibuichi, the exquisite work of which would have made Benvenuto Cellini, could he have seen them, howl, hopelessly outclassed, with envious rage. But a sword she would not buy, unless a collector paid her a commission to buy it for him. For lethal weapons she had no use.

It was in the course of such a transaction that she came up against Mr. Bramley-Bowkett, and, to his mind, she came up against him good and hard.

The affair began in Farringdon's sale-rooms at a sale of Oriental objects of art. The early part of that sale did not interest Miss Timmins; she was there to buy, at a fitting price, a set of lacquer saké cups, for which she had a customer. Farringdon was selling netsuke, those little ivory and wooden figures of men and animals and fishes and dragons and plants, among the makers of which, so Jules de Goncourt declared, are to be found Michael Angelos. Miss Timmins was dutifully, but listlessly, noting on the margins of her catalogue the price of each lot as the hammer fell. During the sale of lot forty-four she saw the young man in spectacles come into the room and stand just inside the door, looking about him with an air of uncertainty.

In a quite detached fashion she decided that it was a pity that he had to wear spectacles, for he was a good-looking boy with an oddly wistful face that made her feel that she would rather like to look after him. Most women had that feeling about John Roaker. It was uncalled-for; John could look after himself. He did so—often.

She watched the sale of another lot, and jotted down the price of it. Then she saw that the good-looking boy was talking to Cartwright, the commissionaire who kept the door, and that they were looking at her. Presently Cartwright came to her.

He leant down and said in her ear: "Please, miss, there's an American gentleman over by the door who'd like you to buy a couple of lots for him."

"Thank you, Cartwright," said Miss Timmins, gratefully.

If anyone asked Cartwright's advice about getting a dealer to buy lots for him, Cartwright always recommended Miss Timmins. He admired Miss Timmins; also he knew that she could be trusted to buy a lot as cheaply as anyone; he had a suspicion that Farringdon's hammer dropped a trifle quicker for her than for anyone who came to his sales. If Cartwright always remembered Miss Timmins when called on to recommend,

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Miss Timmins always remembered Cartwright at the close of the transaction.

She rose and walked round the table with him. As she drew near him, John Roaker found that the suspicion that had entered his mind when he had seen her at a distance was well-grounded. She had a face that made him feel that he would rather like to look after her. Most men had that feeling about Miss Timmins. It was uncalled-for; Miss Timmins could look after herself. She did so—often.

"This is Miss Timmins. You couldn't be in better hands, sir," said Cartwright by way of introduction.

"That's good," said John Roaker, taking off his hat with the shy air that helped women to like him.

Miss Timmins smiled at him. He had not often seen eyes so blue; also he had never seen anyone so pretty look so capable. He did not hesitate for a moment to entrust the matter of buying the swords to her.

He told her that out of the twenty-five swords that were being sold he wished her to buy two—lots ninety-three and ninety-four. Both the swords in these two lots were katana, long, two-handed swords. Lot ninety-three was a Bizen blade, forged by Norimitsu and dated 1456. It was a very good blade, without a scratch on it, and polished to a mirror-like clearness. Lot ninety-four was also a mirror-blade, and it was the pick of all the blades in the sale, and indeed of all the blades that had been sold anywhere in Europe during the previous three or four years. It was not dated; but Rai Kunitsugu had signed it with the signature he used between 1280 and 1300. It was an admirable blade, of an astonishing balance, and in the hands of an expert would cut through the finest Ferrara or Toledo blade as if it were so much blotting-paper. Both the swords were in the wooden sheaths, with wooden hilts, in which the Japanese warriors used to keep them when they were not on the war-path. The only method of distinguishing one from the other was by the signatures, which were engraved not only on the tangs of the blades, but also painted in black ink on the outside of the sheaths.

JOHN ROAKER instructed Miss Timmins to bid up to forty pounds for the sword by Norimitsu and up to one hundred and twenty pounds for the sword by Rai Kunitsugu—wretched prices compared with those the warriors for whom they had been forged paid for them in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. But the sword is superseded. Miss Timmins thought it more than likely that he would get both of them for one hundred and sixty pounds, for no very keen collector of swords was present, except Bramley-Bowkett; and she had never known him pay more than fifty pounds for a sword.

The two swords were still about twenty lots off. Miss Timmins went back to her chair at the table; John Roaker set another chair behind hers and talked to her in a low voice as the sale went on, asking her questions about the lots as they were put up. He bought two lots of netsuke because she said that they were good, or rather she bought them for him.

Then Farringdon began to sell the swords. As Miss Timmins had expected, seeing that none of the really keen collectors were present, prices were running low. The dealers were having it all their own way and quite good blades were going for fifteen or twenty pounds apiece. Miss Timmins kept an eye on Bramley-Bowkett; she saw that he did not bid for any of them. Evidently he was waiting for the Norimitsu or the Rai Kunitsugu.

This did not displease her. She did not want either of the swords to go for an old song; the higher the price they were sold for the higher would be her commission; and though she liked this shy and wistful American boy—he was evidently not more than six years older than she—she felt that if he could run to a hundred and twenty pounds for a sword, he could very well afford the extra six pounds for her commission, if Bramley-Bowkett ran it up to that sum.

At last lot ninety-three, the Norimitsu blade, was put up. Miss Timmins did not join in the bidding till one of the dealers who were competing for it bid fifteen pounds. At twenty pounds Bramley-Bowkett joined in the bidding. She was pleased. That meant that the blade was going up to thirty pounds. It did go up to thirty pounds, and then the dealers dropped out, leaving her and Bramley-Bowkett bidding against one another. She went on bidding; Bramley-Bowkett went on bidding. Hopefully she bid forty pounds; Bramley-Bowkett bid forty-one pounds.

She turned and whispered to John Roaker: "Shall I go on?"

He looked disappointed, more wistful than ever indeed. But he shook his head.

"No; when I fix my limit, I stick to it," he said, sadly.

Miss Timmins approved of this practice. It was her own. But she was sorry to lose the commission. Farringdon knocked down the sword to Bramley-Bowkett.

Then the sword of Rai Kunitsugu was put up. Miss Timmins told herself, with a grim satisfaction, that there was going to be a bigger fight for that. She looked at Bramley-Bowkett with the eyes of a warrior measuring a foe. Bramley-Bowkett

had risen from his chair and was walking down the room. He was looking uncommonly pleased. At least his lips, as a rule so tightly set, were parted in a smile; and his little eyes, set so closely together, were shining.

The bidding for the Rai Kunitsugu sword began. Only dealers were bidding for it. To the surprise of Miss Timmins, Bramley-Bowkett had disappeared. He must have gone into the office to clear lot ninety-three. The dealers went on bidding for the sword with considerable spirit up to forty pounds. Then they began to slacken. At fifty pounds only one was left contending with Miss Timmins. The sword was knocked down to her for fifty-four pounds.

She heard John Roaker breathe a deep sigh of satisfaction.

Then he said: "Gee! If I'd only guessed that I was going to get this Rai for two hundred and sixty dollars, I'd have had the Norimitsu, too!"

"Well, you've got the most important one, anyhow," said Miss Timmins.

They leant back in their chairs, smiling. Bramley-Bowkett came out of the office, carrying the Norimitsu sword. He had not waited to have it wrapped in brown paper. He walked briskly down the opposite side of the room and out of the door. As he passed Miss Timmins fancied that his eyes sought hers in a rather queer look, and that there was a touch of mockery in the smile that still wreathed his lips. She told herself that it was just like the tight-lipped, hard-faced pig to gloat, and thought no more about it.

SHE turned her attention to the sale. There were six more swords to be sold. John Roaker bought the best of them, a sword forged by Nobutsada of Kyoto between 1429 and 1440, nearly as good a blade as the Norimitsu that Bramley-Bowkett had wrested from him. She got it for him for twenty guineas.

The swords came to an end and Farringdon began to sell sword-guards. Miss Timmins's lacquer was many lots away; she took John Roaker to the office to clear his lots. He paid cash for them, received the order to deliver them to him, and took it to the clerk in charge of the sold lots, who handed them over to him. John dropped the two lots of netsuke into his jacket pocket and took up the sword forged by Rai Kunitsugu.

Smiling, he drew the blade from its wooden sheath, and gazed at it with admiring eyes. Of a sudden they opened wide, the smile faded from his face, it became a mask of dismay.

"Sakes alive!" he muttered under his breath, turned the sheath in his hand, and looked at the signature on it.

"B-b-but this isn't the Rai!" he stammered. "It's the Norimitsu!"

"What?" cried Miss Timmins; and she fairly snatched the sheath from his hands.

"It's the Norimitsu," he repeated.

"But it's labelled ninety-four," she said.

"I don't care what it's labelled! It's the Norimitsu!"

Miss Timmins turned to the clerk and said: "Is it really a Norimitsu sword, Mr. Masters?"

Masters, the office expert in Japanese signatures, looked at the sheath and said: "The signature on the sheath is certainly Norimitsu. But we'd better go to the office and look at the signature on the tang."

"I don't want to see any signatures," snapped John Roaker. "When I've seen and handled a blade once I know it. This isn't the blade that was catalogued Rai Kunitsugu."

"Let's go along to the office and get it set right," said Miss Timmins, in a soothing voice.

"But will they set it right?" asked John Roaker.

"Of course they will. Farringdon's have nothing to do with this; they wouldn't," said Miss Timmins in a reassuring voice. "They'll set it right." Then, bethinking herself of the law governing sales by auction, she added in a less reassuring voice: "If they can."

They went to the office. With a hammer and a small punch Masters knocked out the peg which, running through the tang, fastened the wooden hilt to the blade, and drew off the hilt. On the tang was engraved the signature of Norimitsu of Bizen, and the date 1456. Beyond a doubt the swords had been changed. Masters brought Spenser, Farringdon's partner, and told him what had happened.

"It's quite certain that the right labels were on the swords originally. I catalogued all the Japanese stuff myself," he added.

"Oh, we'll set it right—we'll set it right," said Spenser, cheerfully. "Who bought lot ninety-three? If he's gone we'll get in touch with him at once."

"He's gone all right, sir," said Masters, in rueful accents. "It was Mr. Bramley-Bowkett."

"The devil it was!" cried Spenser, and the cheerfulness swept off his face. "Then he's changed the labels again!"

Masters nodded.

"Confound it all! But I gave instructions—special instructions—that he was to be watched very carefully whenever he came to look at the things on view!" cried Spenser, angrily.

"I've no doubt he *was* watched very carefully," said Masters, dryly.

Spenser turned, frowning, to Miss Timmins and John Roaker, and said: "I'm very sorry, Miss Timmins and you, sir, but I'm afraid I sha'n't be able to set it right. This trick has been played on us before. We shall try our best, of course. But the law of auction sales roughly is that you buy what you see put up for sale, and the catalogue does not matter unless there is definite misrepresentation. We will try to get your sword from Mr. Bramley-Bowkett in exchange for this Norimitsu blade. But frankly I haven't much hope of succeeding. All I can do is to refund you the money you paid for this one."

There seemed indeed to be nothing else to be done. Ruefully and protesting that it was the sword and not the money that he wanted, John Roaker received from Spenser the fifty-four pounds he had paid for the Norimitsu blade and put the notes into his case.

Then Miss Timmins asked Spenser what he would do with the Norimitsu blade if Bramley-Bowkett refused to return the Rai Kunitsugu, and was assured that he would keep it till the next sale of good swords.

"Though of course we're going to be out of pocket over it. It won't fetch fifty-four pounds under its own name," he added.

THEY came out of the office. Miss Timmins was looking uncommonly thoughtful. She returned to her chair; John Roaker sat down beside her, very gloomy indeed. She deplored his bad luck in such a sympathetic fashion that he was a little comforted. Then he paid her her commission. There was a dispute. The two lots of netsuke and the Nobusada sword had cost thirty pounds; Miss Timmins's commission was thirty shillings. But he held that, since she had actually bought lot ninety-four for him for fifty-four pounds, he owed her another fifty-four shillings. He thought that she was going to take it. He found that he had another think coming. It looked to be about as easy for him to push over Nelson's Column with his good left hand as to induce Miss Timmins to accept money she did not feel that she had earned. He had never dreamt that anything so delicate and charming to the eye could be so like adamant. Sadly he paid her the thirty shillings.

Farringdon had been selling lacquer most of the time they had been debating the matter of the fifty-four shillings. The set of saké cups was put up; Miss Timmins bought them at a price which would enable her to sell them to the customer she had in mind at a very pleasing profit indeed. She cleared the lot at the office, and it was delivered to her.

"Say, won't you come along somewhere and have tea with me?" said John Roaker with a becoming timidity.

As a rule Miss Timmins icily discouraged clients who, as they were only too prone to do, became attentive. She did not discourage this one; but it was in quite matter-of-fact accents that she said: "Thanks. I should like to. Besides, I want to talk about this sword. If that horrible Bramley-Bowkett thinks he's going to do me in the eye like that, he's wrong."

"But there's nothing to be done about the Rai; that man at Farringdon's said there wasn't," he protested.

"Oh, isn't there?" said Miss Timmins, a trifle scornfully.

He asked her where she would like to have her tea, and added shyly: "Perhaps you'd go somewhere where we could dance?"

The suggestion appealed to her strongly; she was very fond of dancing; except walking, it was the only exercise she got. She hesitated; then she smiled a wicked smile.

"We might go to Thibault's," she said. "It has the best floor and the best band in London."

John Roaker did not observe that wicked smile. He did not know that one of Miss Timmins's best customers, that cheerful and wicked young nobleman, Lord Screddington, was often to be found at Thibault's. He did not know that Miss Timmins was curious to see the ladies or lady with whom that good customer—a customer, it must be admitted, of a colossal cheek that often ruffled her sensibilities—danced when he was not dancing with her. John Roaker made haste to take her to Thibault's.

He ordered tea, and at once she began upon the business of the Rai Kunitsugu. She said that she must have a little time, and he told her that in three days he was going to Paris for a fortnight and would come back to London for a week before returning to the United States. She said that seventeen days ought to be enough. Then she made him write the signature of Rai Kunitsugu on the back of one of his cards so that if she ever again saw the sheath of the sword she would know it. Eagerly he asked her what her plan was; she shook her head and said that it was no use talking about it; it might come off and it might not.

Then, after some tea, they danced. She found him an excellent dancer. They came back to their tea, and he told her about himself. He came from Toledo, Illinois, where he was his father's partner in a large and prosperous hardware store. It was the accident of being born in the town of Toledo

"Sakes alive!" he muttered under his breath, turned the sheath in his hand, and looked at the signature on it.

that had turned his mind to the study of swords; the study of them had led to the collecting of them; now that he was making fifty thousand dollars a year, he was able to collect them firmly. Only the year before had he learnt that the Japanese sword is the greatest of all swords. He was taking seventeen good Japanese swords back to the States, but not, alas! the Rai Kunitsugu.

He talked with enthusiasm, and Miss Timmins let him talk; she could never learn enough about Oriental objects of art. Besides, she liked watching him. She felt that to a sophisticated London art-dealer of nearly twenty his boyish freshness was soothing.

Then Lord Scredington, tall, slim, fair, and debonair, entered, accompanied by a very pretty woman, dark-eyed, dark-haired, with a lovely complexion, but wearing a discontented air that looked as if it did not come off. Miss Timmins knew everything that the eye could tell about that pretty lady long before Lord Scredington had as much as perceived that his favourite dealer in Oriental objects of art was in the room. But the things that her eye told her gave her little pleasure indeed; of course Lord Scredington, being so tall and fair, would be attracted by a slight, dark woman, and no less naturally that slight, dark woman would be admirably and most expensively dressed. The only pleasing thing about her was that she must be at least as old as, or even older than, Lord Scredington, twenty-eight or even thirty—a great age for a woman.

Miss Timmins and John Roaker again danced. As they passed the table at which Lord Scredington and the lady were sitting, Lord Scredington recognized her. Miss Timmins saw him recognize her; she saw his startled air; she saw him turn his eyes to John Roaker and stare at him; she saw him frown. She was glad that John Roaker was wearing such nice clothes and was wholly presentable. She was glad, also, that he was tall and dark; it was natural that she, being slight and fair, should be attracted by a tall, dark man. She leant back a little to smile sweetly up at him.

Miss Timmins and John Roaker again danced. As and the lady were sitting,

Lord Scredington saw that sweet smile. But he did not see, as Miss Timmins did, that John Roaker was too busy dancing to see it. Lord Scredington did not bend down to smile sweetly into the dark lady's face. He was staring rather blankly after Miss Timmins and John Roaker. His frown grew blacker; Miss Timmins saw it grow blacker.

She knew now with whom he danced at Thibault's. He knew with whom she danced at Thibault's. They were, therefore, on level terms. The information she had acquired seemed to have the most pleasing effects on her; never had she smiled on anyone more sweetly or more often than she smiled

on John Roaker—for the most part when he was not looking and Lord Scredington was. But the information he had acquired by no means seemed to have a pleasing effect on Lord Scredington. Though no one could have said that he was actually scowling, he was certainly frowning deeply.

they passed the table at which Lord Scredington Lord Scredington recognized her.

Then it appeared to Miss Timmins that the slight, dark lady asked him what was troubling him; it appeared to her also that he was a trifle short with the lady, for she frowned also and stayed frowning. So it came about that while Miss Timmins and John Roaker were enjoying themselves immensely—it was quite plain that Miss Timmins was enjoying herself immensely from the sweetness and frequency of her smiles—Lord Scredington was no longer looking a cheerful and wicked young nobleman, but merely a wicked young nobleman; and the habitual expression of discontent on the face of the pretty lady with him had deepened about two hundred and fifty per cent.

It was not till the dance was over and she was walking back to her table that Miss Timmins became obviously aware of the presence of Lord Scredington. She nodded and smiled at him, not a very sweet smile, and before he was half-way through a stiff, almost protesting, bow she was smiling up at the wistful face of John Roaker with a smile that was almost sugary. But she was not looking at John Roaker so intently that she failed to observe that Lord Scredington's lips moved, though she did not believe that any sound came from them.

During the interval before the next dance she talked to John Roaker with the liveliest animation. Lord Scredington talked to the slight, dark lady with very little animation; they did not seem nearly as pleased with one another as did John Roaker and Miss Timmins. Their rather gloomy air did not detract from the enjoyment of Miss Timmins; but of the four it is probable that John Roaker was the only one who was enjoying the afternoon greatly.

But since he and she danced every dance and all of it, Miss Timmins enjoyed the afternoon considerably, in spite of the fact that there was a pretty lady with her best customer, for she and John Roaker naturally danced better together as they danced longer together, and she was very fond of dancing. As the afternoon went on and she watched the other pair, she ceased to be greatly disquieted by the discontented lady. She and Lord Scredington did not seem to be quite hitting it off. Doubtless this was owing to the fact that he seemed preoccupied and unable to give her the whole-hearted attention he should have done.

The dancing came to an end and both John Roaker and Miss Timmins came out of Thibault's with considerable reluctance. On the threshold they paused, and he invited

her to dine and dance with him there, or anywhere else she preferred, that evening. Miss Timmins hesitated: he was a nice boy and she liked him; she liked dining in bright places; she liked dancing with him. If there had not been that good customer, Lord Scredington, she would have dined and danced with John Roaker and with an easy mind let anything develop that might develop. But as it was, for her there was absolutely nothing doing, while it rather looked as if there might be a great deal doing for John. To let things develop in a one-sided way would not be fair to him. Therefore she refused the invitation.

He looked so deeply disappointed that she compromised: she would have tea and dance with him at Thibault's the next afternoon. After all he was going to Paris in three days and would only be a week in London on his return from that city before going to the States. No one could take much harm during three days and a week if they were but moderately indulged. They parted with mutual expression of esteem.

THE next morning Miss Timmins moved about her father's little antique shop in Devonshire Street, Theobald's Road, a trifle warily, keeping an eye on the door. Her best customer was apt to arrive with the stealthy suddenness of one of those old-fashioned Red Indians on the war-path. Thanks to her care, when he did arrive she had slipped safely behind the counter, so that there was no opportunity for one of those displays of his colossal cheek that so ruffled her sensibilities.

He came in wearing a cheerful air and greeted her cheerfully. Miss Timmins had a strong feeling that that cheerfulness was forced; she drew a little farther back from the counter and prepared to jump aside. He seemed, however, in a peaceful mood, and asked her some questions about the sale at Farringdon's the day before and what she had bought at it. She told him; there was a pause.

Then in the most casual tone he said: "I didn't know that you danced at Thibault's with anyone but me."

"I don't often," said Miss Timmins, truthfully.

He paused, waiting for her to develop the theme. It seemed of no interest to her.

Then, in the same casual accents, he asked: "Who was that chap you were dancing with?"

"He's my new dancing partner. Isn't he a nice boy—a dear?" said Miss Timmins, with sudden enthusiasm.

Lord Scredington did not say that John Roaker was a dear. He did not say that he was not a dear. He just made a noise in his throat.

Miss Timmins smiled upon him in the friendliest way and said in the kindest accents: "That was a pretty lady you were dancing with. Was she your aunt?"

"My aunt?" cried Lord Scredington, in a tone in which sudden surprise and sudden indignation were nicely blended.

"I thought she might be," said Miss Timmins, hastily and apologetically.

Lord Scredington frowned upon her and said loftily: "If it comes to that, that chap you were dancing with wasn't so much of a boy."

"Oh, yes, he was—quite a boy—twenty-seven—a year younger than you," Miss Timmins protested.

Lord Scredington glared at her.

"Of course he's older than you really—Americans are older than Englishmen, I always think," said Miss Timmins in explanatory accents. "And of course he's a quite uncommon American: he knows more about Japanese swords than anyone I ever came across. And he's got piles and piles of money and he dances beautifully. But you saw him."

Lord Scredington appeared to swallow something; then he said: "Then I should think, taking one thing with another, he'll make you a very nice little husband."

He did not speak in the tone of one who wished the union well.

Miss Timmins blushed; at least she contrived to look as if she were blushing; Lord Scredington believed that she was blushing.

She said shyly: "Isn't it rather early to talk about that kind of thing? I only met him yesterday, you know."

"From the way you were getting on I should think that to-morrow would do the trick," said Lord Scredington, in a most unpleasant voice.

"Oh, to-morrow?" said Miss Timmins, doubtfully.

Lord Scredington appeared to lose his temper—or at any rate what was left of it. He went up into the air with an astonishing velocity and to an astonishing height. He said things, many things, about Miss Timmins. There was probably more truth in many of them than he thought. He compared her to several of God's creatures; one of them was the tigress. Miss Timmins appeared unmoved, but to listen with interest. When he came to earth, rather out of breath, she said that she did not know what he was talking about. Yet he had done his best to make himself clear. The statement appeared to exasperate him, for he made the spring for which she was quite prepared. He missed her. The failure seemed to cool him down.

"Here! Wait a minute!" she cried. "I want you to do something for me."

He said mournfully that he had never loved a dear gazelle without its having tried to bite a piece out of him.

"It wasn't a gazelle you said I was like," said Miss Timmins.

He appeared taken aback; then he said, loftily: "I had my reasons."

After that their relations again became civil and friendly. Presently he invited her to have tea and dance with him at Thibault's that afternoon. Before telling him that she was already engaged to have tea and dance there with John Roaker, she asked him if he was sure that his aunt

would like it. Again their relations grew strained. He protested with great heat that the lady was not his aunt. Miss Timmins apologized quite sweetly for her slip of the tongue and told him that she was going to Thibault's with John Roaker. He said several things under his breath. The only word she caught was the word "jade." She did not think that he was speaking of the nephritic stone. Then he made as if to leave hastily.

"Here! Wait a minute!" she cried. "I want you to do something for me."

He stopped short, gasping. He turned on her; his eyes flashed; he was on the point of telling her to go somewhere, but checked himself.

She said, calmly: "I want you to help me about that beast Bramley-Bowkett."

She told him about the change of swords.

"Why, the brute got me in exactly the same way!" he exclaimed. "But the lots were jade cloak-hooks."

"But you haven't had a row with him?" she said, anxiously.

"No. There was nothing to make a row about. The change of lots might have been a pure accident—just as this change of swords might be. So I'm bearing up with little Bramley on the chance of catching him out over some other trick. Then he'll get what's coming to him with compound interest."

"Well, he ought to get some of it over this," she said, eagerly. "But there's nothing to be done for at least ten days. Then I want you to go round to see Bramley-Bowkett and find if he's got this Rai Kunitsugu sword on one of his sword-racks and where it is exactly. I know he has three sword-racks, for I took a sword round to him one day, for Hogbin, to sell to him."

"Right," he said, cheerfully. "That will suit me down to the ground. But you'll have to get me Rai Kunitsugu's signature so that I shall know the sword when I see it."

"I've got it here," handing him John Roaker's card.

He slipped it into his waistcoat pocket, and assumed an air of deep thoughtfulness. Then, of a sudden—she had grown careless—he grabbed her and kissed her. Miss Timmins's right upper-cut only grazed his left ear. She was forced therefore to content herself with scathing words about his monstrous and colossal cheek. He did not seem deeply affected; his head, indeed, was not bowed in shame. And Miss Timmins was hardly as indignant as she appeared. To herself she passed the matter over lightly; she told herself that a good customer must be humoured; she asked herself what was a kiss.

Friendly relations were resumed. Twenty minutes later, having cajoled and badgered her into promising to dine and dance with him at Thibault's the following night, he departed.

THAT afternoon she danced at Thibault's with John Roaker. He had received a letter from Farringdon expressing his regret that he had been unable to recover the Rai Kunitsugu.

In the course of a pleasant afternoon they became even better acquainted. At the end of it he asked her to dine and dance with him in the evening. She compromised; she agreed to dance with him at the Hotel Cecil the next afternoon. She did so, and was careful, or at any rate moderately careful, to keep their relations on a footing of simple friendliness. But, of course, she could not be responsible for her eyes. Her eyes were always doing things on their own account; and John Roaker was undoubtedly an uncommonly attractive boy. At half-past seven he said good-bye to her, cursing the luck which took him to Paris for the fortnight of all fortnights he craved to spend in London.

Miss Timmins's life sank to its usual quietness. Only three times in the next ten days did she dance with Lord Scredington. On several evenings she watched the Bramley-Bowkett house. She found that Bramley-Bowkett returned at seven-twenty, apparently to dress for dinner, and left again at seven-fifty.

On the tenth day Lord Scredington paid a visit to Bramley-Bowkett, taking with him a jade cloak-hook to exchange. He got rather the better of the exchange, then strolled about the room examining treasures. There were three lacquer sword-racks, of very fine quality; each had rests for five blades. He found that the Rai Kunitsugu was the third blade on the second rack.

Next day John Roaker appeared in the little shop at ten a.m. to invite Miss Timmins to dance with him that afternoon. Miss Timmins accepted, but before going to Thibault's they called at Farringdon's auction rooms, and Farringdon made no difficulty about letting her have the Norimitsu sword.

After dancing all the afternoon they sat on, talking, till seven o'clock. Then Miss Timmins said: "And now we'll go and get the Rai Kunitsugu."

John Roaker appeared astonished, but pleased. They drove in a taxi to Kensington, stopped a hundred yards from the Bramley-Bowkett house, and watched it. At seven-twenty Mr. Bramley-Bowkett arrived in a taxi. Miss Timmins gave him time to get well into his dressing, then they

walked briskly to the house. Miss Timmins told the maid who opened the door to tell her master that she had come with a sword. The maid smiled in a very pleasing fashion at Miss Timmins, ushered them into the treasure room, and left them.

Before that maid had made two steps from the door Miss Timmins had the Rai Kunitsugu off the rack and was putting the Norimitsu in its place. In the middle of doing so her quick woman's eye caught something. She set the two swords side by side.

"Look here," she said, quickly, "these two sheaths are just about the same size! Just stick the Norimitsu blade in the Kunitsugu sheath! I can't bear to handle the beastly things myself."

John Roaker changed the blades in a brace of shakes.

She put the Norimitsu blade, in the Kunitsugu sheath, in its place on the rack; caught him by the sleeve and hurried him to the end of the room. When Mr. Bramley-Bowkett, in the unstained evening dress of the English gentleman, entered, they were absorbed in a case of jade cloak-hooks.

He greeted Miss Timmins with the expectant warmth of a collector about to add to his collection, and she introduced John Roaker to him. John Roaker displayed no warmth of any kind; he regarded Mr. Bramley-Bowkett with an unpleasant eye.

Miss Timmins became the spokeswoman—a rather voluble spokeswoman, though volubility was not, as a rule, one of her leading characteristics. The blade she had come with was the Norimitsu blade that had been sold at the last sale at Farringdon's sale rooms—Mr. Bramley-Bowkett's face lost the expectant warmth of a collector about to add to his collection; there came quite a different glitter into his hard little eyes—she had bought the Kunitsugu blade for Mr. Roaker. But there had been a mistake—the two lots had been mixed up, with the result that he, Mr. Bramley-Bowkett, had the Kunitsugu sword and John Roaker the Norimitsu. Would Mr. Bramley-Bowkett be so kind as to rectify the mistake and change the swords?

Mr. Bramley-Bowkett became suavely gracious in a hard kind of way. Miss Timmins knew quite well the rules of auctions, that the responsibility of getting what he wanted lay with the buyer. He had bought the Kunitsugu sword just for its quality as a sword. He was not interested in this matter of signatures—no: not at all. He liked this particular sword, whether it was forged by Norimitsu, Rai Kunitsugu, or some other Japanese swordsmith, for itself. He was not going to part with it to please anybody.

Miss Timmins protested with a more excited volubility than before, while the face of Mr. Bramley-Bowkett set more and more mulish.

Then she said: "Well, you absolutely refuse to change these swords?"

"I do," said Mr. Bramley-Bowkett in the most dignified accents and with the most dignified air.

Miss Timmins turned to John Roaker, and said, mournfully: "Then there's nothing more to be done. We may as well go."

They went to the door with a depressed, even gloomy, air. John Roaker opened it to let Miss Timmins through, then paused on the threshold to call Mr. Bramley-Bowkett a few names. The most pleasing of these was "hog."

MR. BRAMLEY-BOWKETT, in spite of the names he had been called, felt quite pleased with himself, and looked it. He strolled quietly to the window to watch these absurd young people walk down the street. They came out of the house and walked down it under his very eye. Of a sudden it struck him that they were not wearing an air of bitter disappointment. They were walking briskly and laughing; John Roaker was carrying the sword as if it was his most prized possession; he was almost dandling it.

Mr. Bramley-Bowkett stepped lightly back to the sword-rack. He snatched up the Norimitsu sword and tore it out of the sheath. One look at the blade convinced him that it was indeed a genuine Norimitsu. But he made sure. He knocked out the peg which fixed the hilt on the tang and looked at the signature. It was a genuine Norimitsu signature.

Then there might be seen the pleasing spectacle of a stainlessly-dressed English gentleman leaping lightly about a beautiful room and turning the air blue.

READING for LOVE

By

HUGH WALPOLE

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

Photo: Yevonde.

Mr. Hugh Walpole—and a portion of the MS. of his unpublished novel, "Wintersmoon."

"SEE a person's books and you know what kind of a person that is." Very true: see a man's library and you know where his heart is, if he has a heart. See a man's library——

I have seen so many libraries in my time that I am perhaps a little confused about them; but the noblest library I have ever seen is the grand one in Boston; and the friendliest the Carnegie Library in New York; and the most interesting, Mr. Thomas Wise's library in Hampstead; and the most touching, a certain farmer's library here in Cumberland; and the stupidest and most dead, a millionaire's library in—well, never mind where; and the bravest library, the Braille Library in London; and the most accommodating library, the London Library itself; and the smallest library, the library of the Queen's Doll's

It might be, he thought, as he walked home through the pale gold daisy across whose sheen a few shining grey flakes of snow were lazily falling, that it was the knowledge that Wildhanne was well again, ~~at last~~ better that made him happy. He had arrived home in time last night to have

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House; and the most depressing library, any circulating library of fiction anywhere; and the dullest library, the library of a clerical acquaintance of mine in Rutlandshire; and the most delightful, best-arranged, happiest-looking, most heart-warming library, my own in—again, never mind where.

Photo: Abraham.

Mr. Hugh Walpole's library.

The worst libraries, of course, are those accursed things in glazed sets behind glass. It is as hard for love of books to enter into such a library as it is for the familiar camel to pass through the well-known eye of a needle; it can be done, if only the sets are ancient enough and shabby enough, but the best friend I have among booksellers, Mr. James Bain, of King William Street, told me once of an order someone had to supply a rich gentleman's house with a library, and the only point of importance about the books chosen was that they should be formed of a certain size, so as to fill the proper spaces in the bookshelves neatly.

Libraries should be penetrated with the love of books, so that, when you enter a room where the books are, the air is warm with a kind of delicious humanity and the books have been always so affectionately treated that, like the right kind of dog, they know no fear and yet have their fitting dignity.

There is no rule as to the proper contents of a library, only it must be personal to its owner. You can, like Mr. John Burns, have a library all about London, or you may, like Sir Edmund Gosse, have a passion for the Elizabethan and Restoration drama, or you may, like my friend Aristides, care only for books about mountaineering; but what you must be is honest to the impulses of your heart. That brings one, of course, to the vexed question of collecting, and the fascinating tyranny of first editions. There is no question so hotly debated among book-lovers as this. Only the other day one of the truest lovers of books said to me that he could see nothing in old editions, and all that he wanted was a fine, clear type and an impeccable text.

I can speak, I think, with some knowledge on this subject, because the first edition fever entered my blood at a certain quite definite moment and left it again at another, so that I am free of it now and can look upon the disease with a dispassionate eye. That does not mean that I would for a moment surrender the original editions that I possess. I love them all, and I think that they have a certain affection in return for me; but the passion is over, I haunt the splendid halls of Hodgson and Sotheby no longer, Mr. Maggs and Mr. Quaritch send me their magnificent catalogues now in vain (I would not have them cease to do this; one never knows when one may begin again).

I caught the disease late. It was in the war, when I was home on leave from Russia and attended, with a friend, one of those magnificent Red Cross sales. The first edition of "The Monk," by Mr. Matthew Lewis, was held up to us, and my friend said:

" Would you like to have that ? " and I said " Yes," and began to nod to the auctioneer's bid. I nodded as far as my purse would allow me, and then, with a sigh, retired, only to be amazed by hearing my friend say to me a moment later : " You've got them, they're yours," and then found that he also, for my sake, had been nodding, and that we two had been the only bidders in the room.

This somewhat irritating initiation was my undoing. For the next five years I haunted every old bookshop in England. I bought, of course, at first unwisely, but soon learnt a thing or two and, hardest lesson of all, trained myself to fit my desires to my purse. Never for me the Kilmarnock Burns and the first Gray's " Elegy " and a second folio, but there are plenty of things easier than those, and, indeed, when once you start opportunities throng in upon you and the blood beats in your heart and your eyes become dim and drink and drugs are nothing to it.

Where lies the charm and the fascination of these things, and has the securing and housing of them anything to do with a real love of books ? Sometimes, most obviously, yes. There has never been an edition since so fine and noble in type and paper as those original volumes of " The Waverley Novels," and most of them, too, to be picked up for the merest song. If a book has played a great part in your life, as Chapman's " Homer " has in mine, then it is natural, I think, to love to have it in its splendid original spaciousness, bound in that beautiful old deep red morocco, than which there is no colour in the world finer. There is, too, a true and honest value in the pleasure you get from handling a volume that was itself once handled in the very first week of its existence by trembling and excited readers. One remembers, for instance, how, when " The Fortunes of Nigel " first appeared, people were seen reading it in the streets as they walked along and so bumping into one another in a fine and heady confusion. Very thrilling, too, are those shilling parts in their green or yellow paper covers with all their homely advertisements thick upon them, so that " The Newcomes " or " Bleak House " or " Framley Parsonage " seem to speak for a whole glorious period of life and literature as you turn these old-fashioned pages. Or there are the books with pictures, the Ainsworths with their Cruikshanks, the Trollopes with their Millais, the Levers with their " Phiz " ; and no later impressions of those plates can ever possibly have the same freshness as the early ones. Or there are, of course, the presentation copies, Morris and Tennyson, Dickens and Carlyle, Lamb and Charlotte Brontë, the ink of their names yellow on the page ; and here upon this very place their hand must have rested.

All this is legitimate and credible enough and belongs to the true love of books. I am more doubtful about the passion for rarity. It is, I suppose, charming to have something that almost no one else in the world possesses, but there are a good many things belonging to all of us of which this may with equal truth be said ; and I think that when, because of a misprinted word or an inaccurate date or an omitted phrase, prices mount to an incredible height, the love of books has been left far behind and the love of notoriety has taken its place.

NO one can have a library, whether small or big, without realizing almost painfully the active life of the books themselves. It is here that the danger to the book-owner lies, for, read as lustily as he may, he cannot read everything, and sections of his library will, before he knows where he is, feel themselves neglected. There is, of course, in the first place the important matter of arrangement. There can have been nobody who has been forced to move his library from one room to another but has realized, as he sees the books lying in tangled heaps on the ground, how oddly they have for the time lost their personality. That is why those piles of ill-assorted volumes heaped together on the floor of a second-hand bookseller's have so miserable and depressing an effect, and you can almost hear if you listen the small sigh of pleasure that a book gives when you lift it out of the sorry mess and restore it to some of its true personality. I believe it, then, to be quite simply true that books have their own very personal feeling about their place in the shelves. They like to be close to suitable companions, and I remember once on coming into my library that I was persistently disturbed by my " Jane Eyre." Going up to it, wondering what was the matter with it, restless because of it, I only after a morning's uneasiness discovered that it had been placed next to my Jane Austens, and anyone who remembers how sharply Charlotte criticized Jane will understand why this would never do.

In all seriousness the trouble of it is that the reader, as I have said, cannot be reading all his library at the same time. Two or three books one *can* read at the same time, than which there is nothing pleasanter ; a taste of Sir Thomas Brown in the morning, Jane Austen for tea, and Peacock for supper—could there be anything pleasanter ? The trouble about one's duty to one's library springs rather from one's state of mind. A sudden wave of

conscience at the cheating of the Exchequer over income-tax may lead one to the sermons of Hooker and John Wesley's Journal, and it is then that your Congreves and Wycherleys and fine paper edition of Petronius with illustrations will feel themselves outrageously neglected.

The solution of this difficult matter is that, after a time, libraries settle down. Everyone knows that philosophic air of accepting the situation that creeps over every library after a certain period of discontent. I said every library, but that is too general. There are rooms where one knows at once on entering that discontent is brooding and that it will always be so. These are rooms in which glaring *éditions de luxe* are laid out on the table, not for reading but for admiration, and where the latest novel or two are piled beside the easy-chair. There is no real love of literature here, no real love of reading here, and the older books on the bookshelves know it. Owners of such libraries are for ever wondering why things go wrong with their books; volumes disappear, and they suppose it is because dishonest visitors steal them; do they try to move a book from a shelf, numbers of other books fall upon their heads; and when they would arrange a volume or two all the books close at hand fall on their backs and lie there sulkily contemptuous. Their library never "looks right," they can't tell why; would it not be better if they moved their poetry *there* or put Froude and Macaulay (whom they have never bothered as yet to read) on to that shelf over there? No, madam, it will not make the slightest difference; what you have got to change is your reading heart, and as you are far too old and self-satisfied for that you had better leave the matter alone.

I am, possibly, occupying too great a space with these thoughts about libraries, because, of course, some of the best readers in the world have scarcely owned a book in their lives. I have a friend who owns a thumbed stumpy copy of John Donne and no other book in the world; I have another whose library consists only of Izaak Walton, his "Compleat Angler," Lamb's Letters, and a shabby Keats; and another whose Cambridge Shakespeare is all that he requires. These readers, it will often have been noticed, are almost always rather contemptuous fellows, and that is because they have no possessions. Anyone who is the possessor of beautiful things lies under two great disadvantages: one that he may be robbed at any moment of his possessions, and the other that so many of his friends are unable to appreciate them, and humiliate him by their false and insincere cries of pleasure. But the man who has no possessions is afraid of no robber, and is in the glorious position of being able to look with superiority upon the possessions of others. My friend who is the owner of the little Donne resembles in certain ways Cardinal M——, who would eat the merest crust of bread at a friend's sumptuous table and drink only a glass of clear water, and then hurry home and enjoy his cakes and ale in the security of his own chamber. This friend of mine would have you to understand that he reads very little, and that any man who is going to understand what he reads must do the same. Nevertheless, there is almost no book you

I began to nod to the auctioneer's bid.

can mention that he has not read, by accident as it were, and he has a habit, of which all his friends are now aware, of collecting a number of volumes in any house where he may be, putting them in his shabby bag, reading them at the next house whither he comes, and then leaving them there; a habit quite honest in its intentions, but unfortunate in its ultimate confusions.

A lover of books of another sort is the one who treats every book in the world as his own. His face wreathed with happy smiles, he will go up and down your library all the day, picking out a volume now here and now there, piling them in a fine heap on the floor beside him, digging into one at this place and another at that; then, taking out his pencil, will mark a fine phrase or two, will in his excitement bend the book back until it breaks, and will even (I have known this not once nor twice only) tear out a page that has met with his appreciation and press it into his pocket.

Then there are, of course, the readers who, like Dominie Sampson, are so deeply entranced by your library that they can never for an instant leave it. These are glorious creatures, and for ever to be encouraged, because if the true love of books is anywhere it is in their hearts and souls; their drawbacks are that once in your library they will stay in it for ever. They remain in it for weeks and weeks; they will pay no attention to any other of your guests; they regard you yourself as simply a sort of adjunct to your library, a kind of key to the door or latch to the window; and when at last you venture to suggest to them that their bedchamber is needed for some other guest, they regard you with a fierce and surprised hostility as though you had done them an immortal injury.

And then, to be finished with this catalogue, for, of course, there is no end to the variety of readers, there is the reader who always despises any book that you may mention because he himself privately knows a better one. "Ah, yes," he may say, talking of "Paradise Lost," "that's all very well, but there is a poem about the Garden of Eden by an Irishman who lived in Dublin in the 'forties that I must show you when you come to stay with me. I know that it's the fashion just now to talk about Milton, but you wait until you read a canto or two of this other thing, then you'll see." Or again, "Yes, King Lear's right enough, I dare say, but there's a study of an old man in a volume of short stories published in the early 'nineties by John Lane that's positively astonishing. For myself I think that there has been a bit too much talk about Shakespeare." Well, well, we all have our hobbies, and most of them are harmless enough.

AND so one comes to one of the strangest aspects of the reading passion, and that is one's susceptibility to instincts, to moods, and, most of all, to places. So strong are these things in us that one is inclined to feel after a varied experience that no book is written by its author, or rather that an author merely collects notes for a certain suggested work and that every reader then writes the book for himself. Whence comes it that I find it almost impossible to read any work, fiction, poetry, or history, that has to do with the East? In childhood "The Arabian Nights" did not allure me, and later on, while Pierre Loti enchanted me when he wrote about his own France he said nothing to me at all when he painted so picturesquely Morocco. I have a friend to whom anything about London from Pepys to James Bone is a sort of emetic, although he himself loves London dearly. I have another to whom anything concerning Ireland, whether it be Yeats's theories, George Moore's intimacies, or James Stephens's adorable tales and poems, is equally dreary and impossible; and I know a lady, a true lover of literature, for whom Jane Austen is so completely the perfect novelist that any story that has to do with anything more violent than a tea party is unreal and melodramatic, yes, even though it be "Anna Karenina" or "Cousine Bette." And yet she herself is a very modern lady who has had in her time her full share of adventure.

This is what makes us as readers such prejudiced critics. When I come to examine myself and enter into that engaging business of making lists, I discover that, without fear or favour and with my hand on my heart, my half-dozen favourite poets are, in the order named, Wordsworth, Keats, Matthew Arnold, Browning, Robert Bridges, and John Clare; and when I look at that list I know that, apart from their individual genius, it is because of their evocation of English scenes and sights and sounds that I love them so much. Clare, discovered for me a few years ago by Mr. Blunden, was a tremendous event in my life. I felt that this was a poet for whom I had for years been waiting; not a great poet, I suppose, at least in the sense of philosophical greatness, a monotonous poet to many people, and yet someone exactly *right* for me, just as Victor Hugo and Byron will always be exactly wrong. And then, if I were to go a little farther into my preferences, I would find that, Shakespeare aside, the next four volumes that I would find it hardest in the world to do without are Lamb's Letters, Keats's Letters, Lockhart's Scott, and

When "The Fortunes of Nigel" first appeared, people were seen reading it in the streets and bumping into one another.

Boswell's Johnson, and these again principally because they are soaked through and through with love of England, or rather, with apologies to Lockhart, of Britain. If I go farther again and choose amongst the novelists, I find that, with the exception of Dostoievsky, whose "Karamazov" seems to me the greatest novel the world has yet seen, my truest and most rewarding friends are Scott, Fielding, Jane Austen, Trollope, and Hardy, all of these once more English to the very roots.

With this predisposition of mine, then, it would be absurd for me to attempt any real criticisms of foreign literature, nor could I approach any English author whose spirit was foreign with any true and unbiased judgment. I am well aware, indeed, that my preferences are desperately conventional; it has been for so long, for instance, the accustomed platitude to say that Boswell's Johnson and Lockhart's Scott are the two best biographies in the language, but then, if they are, what are you to do about it? I should like so much to temper this portion of my essay with every kind of foreign and obscure name; I should like to declare that the poems of Raymond de Norpois are the only ones that really give me pleasure, and that the novels of Stanislas Woindewitz are the only novels in the world of real psychological distinction; but I am undoubtedly hedged in by my English fields and lanes. During the war I was for nearly a year on the Galician front with three books only: a one-volume edition of Shakespeare, the Oxford edition of the poems of Robert Bridges, and "Hopes and Fears," by Charlotte Mary Yonge. I found the last of these three in a filthy hotel in Warsaw, its two closely-printed volumes quite fresh in their nice dark blue covers. Shakespeare I read from end to end, and then again, and with real honesty appreciated him for the first time in my life. Robert Bridges I had loved since I was a boy, but no one can know what those "Shorter Poems" especially meant to me during that catastrophic retreat to Tarnople. And as to Charlotte Mary! When a few years ago a critic, meaning I am afraid to be unkind, said that in a certain book of mine I was Charlotte Mary Yonge trying to be Charlotte Brontë, he little knew what a compliment he paid me. It comes to this, that in our reading we cannot escape our environment. No one's tender feelings should ever be hurt when an intimate friend avows an opinion of a book far different from our own, for behind that opinion lie how many scenes and circumstances, how many strange journeys in far lands, how many snug and intimate settlings down beside a cosy fire for a winter's evening, how

many delighted meetings with unexpected friends, how many unfortunate disappointments, how many critical moments of distress and even anguish when some book has gently pushed itself forward to prove itself the only understanding comforter!

The trail of the platitude lies, I fear, over this, but the whole question of personal criticism in one's reading is of serious importance. How common it is to move out of one circle of readers into another and to find that the whole balance of criticism is completely changed! In the circle that one has just left certain authors are taken for granted as magnificent, certain others as stupid and old-fashioned, and then behold the stupid ones are exalted, the glorious ones pulled down. The trouble of it is that often enough one cannot find substantial and sufficient reason for this positive change. The opinions of the new group are every whit as dogmatic as the opinions of the old; reasons are given to you, reasons that seem quite absolute to the persons who hold them, and yet for yourself, taking the middle course, the whole thing resolves itself more and more into personal idiosyncrasies and habits.

In our official criticism we are not, of course, nearly as dogmatic as in the old days we used to be. The times of the thundering denunciations of *The Quarterly* and *The Edinburgh* are gone by for ever, and the result of it is that for our general reading we tend to split up more and more into sets and cliques; the field of literature is so much larger than it was and every man may choose to his own liking.

THE pleasure that we get from writers who are not of the first rank of genius depends very largely, too, on the periods to which they belong. During my youth, and I fancy until the end of the war, everything Victorian was gravely under suspicion. The catastrophes and disappointments of the war left us with a deep contempt for what seemed to us a naive and desperately complacent idealism. Poems like "In Memoriam," "A Death in the Desert," or "Mr. Sludge" seemed to us to display the mind of a self-satisfied child, Carlyle's appeal to force was heretic, George Eliot appeared to be burdened with a sham and ponderous philosophy, and it was very natural and significant that the one novelist of the nineteenth century who expressed in her work no philosophy at all, whose observation was ironic, whose genius was mainly in the humours of little things, was our own Jane Austen, who might, in spirit at least, have belonged to our post-war time.

But as time passes and the bitter cynicism left to us by the war softens once again our view changes. Certain of our writers having very definitely stripped the pretentiousness from some of the Victorian figures, we feel a kind of self-righteous conceit, as though now, having given ourselves the satisfaction of saying to some of those giants, "There, you see you are not a bit the fine fellows you thought you were"—now, having tweaked our fingers in their faces, we can settle down to a fresh and more appreciative study of them. As a period swings into favour once more all kinds of writers reappear who have been for long forgotten. I doubt myself whether the revival of Victorian appreciation will lead to many rediscoveries. It is remarkable, if you probe below a dozen great writers of the Victorian period, how far you fall. And in that respect at least the Georgian time is superior; if we have not many giants we have an astonishing number of interesting individual writers, among whom I think some later period may make some very adventurous discoveries.

That is why I fancy judicious and intelligent reading of contemporary literature is so difficult.

A modern reader must feel a certain doubt, I imagine, as to whether to envy the reader of, say, eighty years ago or no. In 1840 the English reader had certainly plenty to read; he had also more leisure in which to read, and was able to enjoy a closer proximity to his books than he is to-day. Of the novel there had been, at least up to that time, very little written criticism; the novel was then a newer art and the reader was more credible of it; he also knew very clearly what he wanted. What a novel reader wanted was to spend his time in the company of persons who, by their multiplied energies and activities, created a little world of their own. He definitely cheated himself into believing in them because of the fun that he knew he was going to have, and this was a great help to the novelists, because they too were able to persuade themselves of the reality of their little worlds.

There was, in England at least, very little talk about technique and no insistence at all upon novel ideas; there was, in England at any rate, an accepted convention about novels: right was intended to triumph, wrong to be ruthlessly defeated, and the difference between right and wrong was so clear that nobody could possibly mistake it. Being free then of moral and philosophical preoccupations, the novelists could fling themselves into the lives of their characters and lose all sense of an outside critical world. But in our time there is a constant cry that the old form of the novel is worn out, and an almost pathetic determination that no book shall be guilty of a moral purpose.

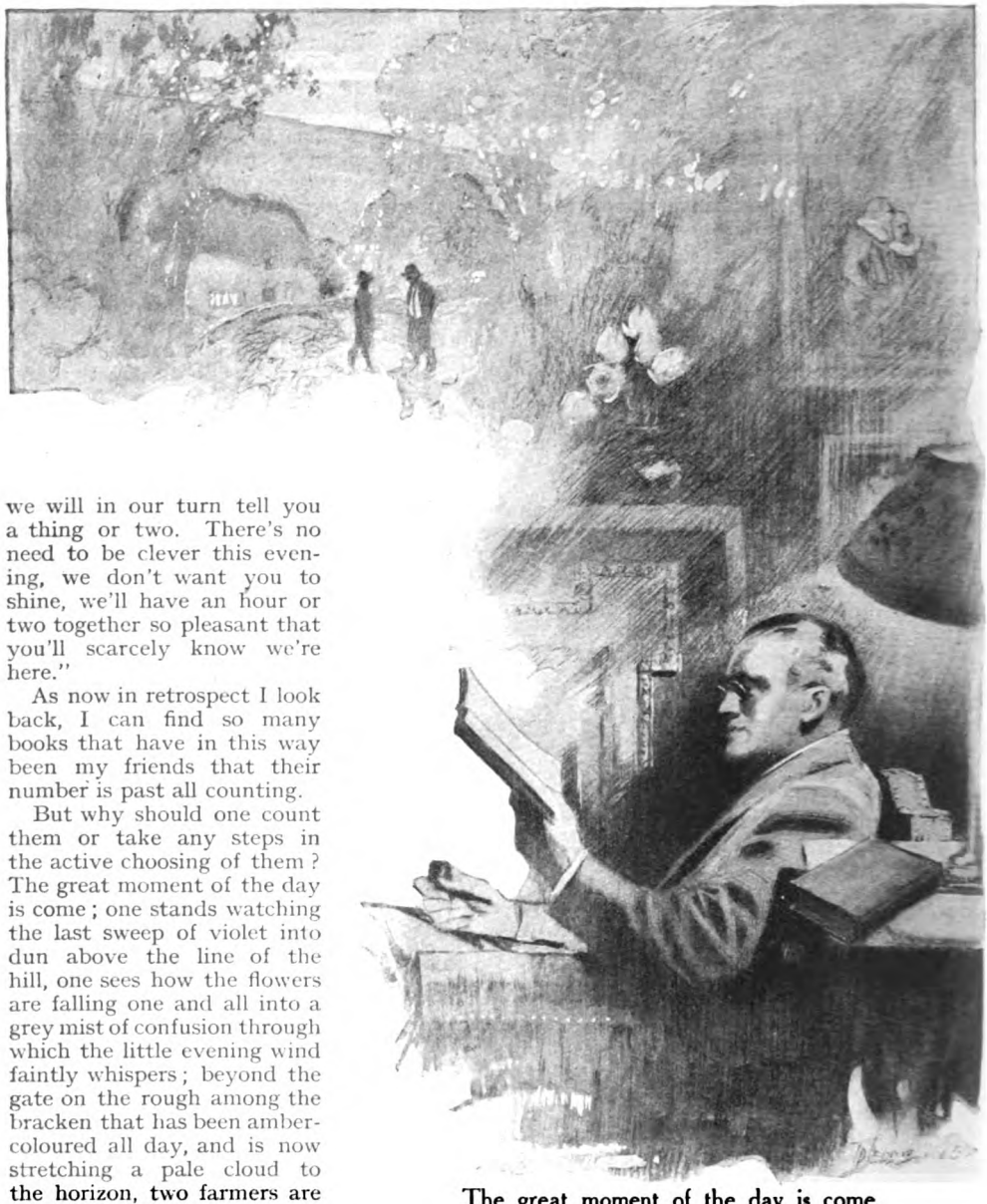
So far as the fun of the reader is concerned this is all, as Mr. Forster's curate in "The Room with a View" said of a picture in the Uffizi, "rather a pity." I believe that circumstances have altered very little, and that a novel to be absorbing has to have precisely the two ingredients that it had a hundred years ago, a narrative gift (and it doesn't matter whether the narrative is about a tea party or a murder trial) and the creation of living characters.

ALL this theorizing, however, has little to do with the real love of reading. Give me a clear week in the country with no interruptions, no modern inventions, whether of motor-car, wireless, or telephone, and I will devour with eager enjoyment any three plays by Euripides, George Moore's "Hail and Farewell," Professor Bradley's Shakespearean tragedy, "Pride and Prejudice," a volume of Tchehov's short stories, Pope's "Rape of the Lock," Carlyle's "Oliver Cromwell," and Mr. Wells's "Mr. Polly." Have these anything in common? If I look at them together in retrospect do I find in them any guide to my own personality? Why do these works, so different in time and place and spirit, all seem alike to belong to me in some especial fashion? Suppose that I had during this same week been compelled to read, say, Meredith's "Richard Feverel," The Georgics, Tennyson's "In Memoriam," Galsworthy's "Forsyte" books, Cowper's Letters, a volume of Gibbon, a novel by M. André Gide, why is it that this second collection of works, surely as fine as those in the first, seem to me inchoate, scattered, and to stand for no ecstasy at all? I cannot say. There must be some personal instinct in myself that leads me to claim the one group as my own and to feel that the other group lies outside my spirit. And this is all, I suppose, that the reader really has to do, to gather round him the works that in some mysterious fashion are intended for him. Critical judgment may go some of the way, but this lazy personal intimacy is, as it is with human beings, beyond analysis.

A lover of books of another sort is the one who will tear out a page that has met with his appreciation and press it into his pocket.

And that is, I suppose, what the writer also has to do, to gather round him as he goes those who are looking in life for the things for which he is also searching.

This is not to say that the reader has nothing to do but to sit down and allow the works for which he cared idly to approach him. The reader has to see that he is perpetually at work at developing his sense of taste and touch and vision. One has often read of learned judges, Cabinet Ministers, and philosophers who, exhausted with the brain-work of the day, care only for the reading of detective stories. There is nothing wrong about detective stories, save that there are not, alas, enough good ones, but I have never understood why a volume of Hazlitt's Essays or Lamb's Letters or Mr. De La Mare's poetry should not be as easy reading for these weary giants as the works of Mr. Oppenheim or Mr. Sax Rohmer. But there is a kind of luxury of laziness in reading which is perhaps the best thing in all the world. It is to be captured only, I think, through the old books, books that you know so well that they step out and meet you, take you by the arm, and whisper in your ear, "Now lie back and talk to us and then



The great moment of the day is come.

we will in our turn tell you a thing or two. There's no need to be clever this evening, we don't want you to shine, we'll have an hour or two together so pleasant that you'll scarcely know we're here."

As now in retrospect I look back, I can find so many books that have in this way been my friends that their number is past all counting.

But why should one count them or take any steps in the active choosing of them? The great moment of the day is come; one stands watching the last sweep of violet into dun above the line of the hill, one sees how the flowers are falling one and all into a grey mist of confusion through which the little evening wind faintly whispers; beyond the gate on the rough among the bracken that has been amber-coloured all day, and is now stretching a pale cloud to the horizon, two farmers are talking:—

"Well, good night."

"Good night."

Now the only sound in all the world is the running stream; you turn down the path, open the door, find your way by the light of the fire to the lamp, light it, and then turn. The books crowd in upon you, they are pressing, urgent, upon every side. As you stand by one of the bookcases, there is a glorious instant of indecision that you would prolong if Nature would but allow it. then the book, almost without deliberate consciousness, is in your hand, your chair is drawn to the blaze, and with a sigh of content you are off and away.

MULLINER'S BUCK-U-UPPO

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

THE village Choral Society had been giving a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Sorcerer" in aid of the Church Organ Fund; and, as we sat in the window of the Anglers' Rest, smoking our pipes, the audience came streaming past us down the little street. Snatches of song floated to our ears, and Mr. Mulliner began to croon in unison.

"'Ah me! I was a pa-ale you-oung curate then!'" chanted Mr. Mulliner in the rather snuffling voice in which the amateur singer seems to find it necessary to render the old songs.

"Remarkable," he said, resuming his natural tones, "how fashions change, even in clergymen. There are very few pale young curates nowadays."

"True," I agreed. "Most of them are beefy young fellows who rowed for their colleges. I don't believe I have ever seen a pale young curate."

"You never met my nephew Augustine, I think?"

"Never."

"The description in the song would have fitted him perfectly. You will want to hear all about my nephew Augustine."

AT the time of which I am speaking (said Mr. Mulliner) my nephew Augustine was a curate, and very young and extremely pale. As a boy he had completely outgrown his strength, and I rather think that at his Theological College some of the wilder spirits must have bullied him; for when he went to Lower Briskett-in-the-Midden to assist the vicar, the Rev. Stanley Brandon, in his cure of souls, he was as meek and mild a young man as you could meet in a day's journey. He had flaxen hair, weak blue eyes, and the general demeanour of a saintly but timid codfish. Precisely, in short, the sort of young curate who seems to have been so common in the 'eighties, or whenever it was that Gilbert wrote "The Sorcerer."

The personality of his immediate superior did little or nothing to help him to overcome his native diffidence. The Rev. Stanley Brandon was a huge and sinewy man of violent temper, whose red face and glittering eyes might well have intimidated the toughest curate. The Rev. Stanley had been a heavyweight boxer at Cambridge, and I gather from Augustine that he seemed to be always on the point of introducing into debates on parish matters the methods which had made him so successful in the roped ring. I remember Augustine telling me that once, on the occasion when he had ventured to oppose the other's views in the matter of decorating the church for the Harvest Festival, he thought for a moment that the vicar was going to drop him with a right hook to the chin. It was some quite trivial point that had come up—a question as to whether the pumpkin would look better in the apse or the clerestory, if I recollect rightly—but for several seconds it seemed as if blood was about to be shed.

Such was the Rev. Stanley Brandon. And yet it was to the daughter of this formidable man that Augustine Mulliner had permitted himself to lose his heart. Truly, Cupid makes heroes of us all.

Jane was a very nice girl, and just as fond of Augustine as he was of her. But, as each lacked the nerve to go to the girl's father and put him abreast of the position of affairs, they were forced to meet surreptitiously. This jarred upon Augustine,

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who, like all the Mulliners, loved the truth and hated any form of deception. And one evening, as they paced beside the laurels at the bottom of the vicarage garden, he rebelled.

"My dearest," said Augustine, "I can no longer brook this secrecy. I shall go into the house immediately and ask your father for your hand."

Jane paled and clung to his arm. She knew so well that it was not her hand but her father's foot which he would receive if he carried out this mad scheme.

"No, no, Augustine! You must not!"

"But, darling, it is the only straightforward course."

"But not to-night. I beg of you, not to-night."

"Why not?"

"Because father is in a very bad temper. He has just had a letter from the bishop, rebuking him for wearing too many orphreys on his chasuble, and it has upset him terribly. You see, he and the bishop were at school together, and father can never forget it. He said at dinner that if old Boko Bickerton thought he was going to order him about he would jolly well show him."

"And the bishop comes here to-morrow for the Confirmation services!" gasped Augustine.

"Yes. And I'm so afraid they will quarrel. It's such a pity father hasn't some other bishop over him. He always remembers that he once hit this one in the eye for pouring ink on his collar, and this lowers his respect for his spiritual authority. So you won't go in and tell him to-night, will you?"

"I will not," Augustine assured her with a slight shiver.

"And you will be sure to put your feet in hot mustard and water when you get home? The dew has made the grass so wet."

"I will indeed, dearest."

"You are not strong, you know."

"No, I am not strong."

"You ought to take some really good tonic."

"Perhaps I ought. Good night, Jane."

"Good night, Augustine."

The lovers parted. Jane slipped back into the vicarage like a homing rabbit, and Augustine made his way to his cosy rooms in the High Street. And the first thing he noticed on entering was a parcel on the table, and beside it a letter.

He opened it listlessly, his thoughts far away.

"*My dear Augustine.*"

He turned to the last page and glanced at the signature. The letter was from his Aunt Angela, the wife of my brother, Wilfred Mulliner. You may remember that I once told you the story of how these two came together. If so, you will recall that my brother Wilfred was the eminent chemical researcher who had invented, among other specifics, such world-famous preparations as Mulliner's Raven Gipsy Face Cream and the Mulliner Snow of the Mountains Lotion. He and Augustine had never been particularly intimate, but between Augustine and his aunt there had always existed a warm friendship.

My dear Augustine (wrote Angela Mulliner)—

I have been thinking so much about you lately, and I cannot forget that, when I saw you last, you seemed very fragile and deficient in vitamines. I do hope you take care of yourself.

I have been feeling for some time that you ought to take a tonic, and by a lucky chance Wilfred has just invented one which he tells me is the finest thing he has ever done. It is called Buck-U-Uppo, and acts directly on the red corpuscles. It is not yet on the market, but I have managed to smuggle a sample bottle from Wilfred's laboratory, and I want you to try it at once. I am sure it is just what you need.

Your affectionate aunt,

ANGELA MULLINER.

P.S.—You take a tablespoonful before going to bed, and another just before breakfast.

Augustine was not an unduly superstitious young man, but the coincidence of this tonic arriving so soon after Jane had told him that a tonic was what he needed affected him deeply. It seemed to him that this thing must have been meant. He shook the bottle, uncorked it, and, pouring out a liberal tablespoonful, shut his eyes and swallowed it.

The medicine, he was glad to find, was not unpleasant to the taste. It had a slightly pungent flavour, rather like old boot-soles beaten up in sherry. Having taken the dose, he read for awhile in a book of theological essays, and then went to bed.

And, as his feet slipped between the sheets, he was annoyed to find that Mrs. Wardle, his housekeeper, had once more forgotten his hot-water bottle.

"Oh, dash!" said Augustine.

He was thoroughly upset. He had told the woman over and over again that he suffered from cold feet and could not get to sleep unless the dogs were properly warmed up. He sprang out of bed and went to the head of the stairs.

"Mrs. Wardle!" he cried.

There was no reply.

"Mrs. Wardle!" bellowed Augustine

in a voice that displaced a flake of plaster from the ceiling. Until to-night he had always been very much afraid of his housekeeper and had both walked and talked softly in her presence. But now he was conscious of a strange new fortitude. His head was singing a little, and he felt equal to a dozen Mrs. Wardles.

Shuffling footsteps made themselves heard.

"Well, what is it now?" asked a querulous voice.

Augustine snorted, and another flake of plaster fell from the ceiling.

"I'll tell you what it is now," he roared. "How many times have I told you always to put a hot-water bottle in my bed? You've forgotten it again, you old cloth-head!"

Mrs. Wardle peered up, astounded and militant.

"Mr. Mulliner, I am not accustomed——"

"Shut up!" thundered Augustine. "What I want from you is less back-chat and more hot-water bottles. Bring it up at once, or I leave to-morrow. Let me endeavour to get it into your concrete skull that you aren't the only person letting rooms in this village. Any more lip and I walk straight round the corner, where I'll be appreciated. Hot-water bottle ho! And look slippy about it."

"Yes, Mr. Mulliner. Certainly, Mr. Mulliner. In one moment, Mr. Mulliner."

"Action! Action!" boomed Augustine. "Show some speed. Put a little snap into it."

"Yes, yes, most decidedly, Mr. Mulliner," replied the chastened voice from below.

"How many times have I told you always to put a hot-water bottle in my bed?"

An hour later, as he was dropping off to sleep, a thought crept into Augustine's mind. Had he not been a little brusque with Mrs. Wardle? Had there not been in his manner something a shade abrupt—almost rude? Yes, he decided regretfully, there had. He lit a candle and reached for the diary which lay on the table at his bedside.

He made an entry.

> The meek shall inherit the earth. Am I sufficiently meek? I wonder. This evening, when reproaching Mrs. Wardle, my worthy housekeeper, for omitting to place a hot-water bottle in my bed, I spoke quite crossly. The provocation was severe, but still I was surely to blame for allowing my passions to run riot. Mem.: Must guard agst this.

But, when he woke next morning, different feelings prevailed. He took his ante-breakfast dose of Buck-U-Uppo: and, looking at the entry in the diary, could scarcely believe that it was he who had written it. "Quite cross?" Of course he had been quite cross. Wouldn't anybody be quite cross who was for ever being persecuted by beetle-wits who forgot hot-water bottles?

Erasing the words with one strong dash of a thick-leaded pencil, he scribbled in the margin a hasty "Applesauce! Served the old idiot right!" and went down to breakfast.

He felt most amazingly fit. Undoubtedly, in asserting that this tonic of his acted forcefully upon the red corpuscles, his Uncle Wilfred had been right. Until that moment Augustine had never supposed that he had any red corpuscles; but now, as he sat waiting for Mrs. Wardle to bring him his fried egg, he could feel them dancing about all over him. They seemed to be forming rowdy parties and sliding down his spine. His eyes sparkled, and from sheer joy of living he sang a few bars from the hymn for those of riper years at sea.

He was still singing when Mrs. Wardle entered with a dish.

"Having a little trouble with the dumb friend, bish?" he asked, genially.

"What's this?" demanded Augustine, eyeing it dangerously.

"A nice fried egg, sir."

"And what, pray, do you mean by nice? It may be an amiable egg. It may be a civil, well-meaning egg. But if you think it is fit for human consumption, adjust that impression. Go back to your kitchen, woman; select another; and remember this time that you are a cook, not an incinerating machine. Between an egg that is fried and an egg that is cremated there is a wide and substantial difference. This difference, if you wish to retain me as a lodger in these far too expensive rooms, you will endeavour to appreciate."

THE glowing sense of well-being with which Augustine had begun the day did not diminish with the passage of time. It seemed, indeed, to increase. So full of effervescing energy did the young man feel that, departing from his usual custom of spending the morning crouched over the fire, he picked up his hat, stuck it at a rakish angle on his head, and sallied out for a healthy tramp across the fields.

It was while he was returning, flushed and rosy, that he observed a sight which is rare in the country districts of England—the spectacle of a bishop running. It is not often in a place like Lower Briskett-in-the-Midden that you see a bishop at all; and when you do he is either riding in a stately car or pacing at a dignified walk. This one was sprinting like a Derby winner, and Augustine paused to drink in the sight.

The bishop was a large, burly bishop, built for endurance rather than speed; but he was making excellent going. He flashed past Augustine in a whirl of flying gaiters: and then, proving himself thereby no mere specialist but a versatile all-round athlete, suddenly dived for a tree and climbed rapidly into its branches. His motive, Augustine readily divined, was to elude a rough, hairy dog which was toiling in his wake. The dog reached the tree a moment after his quarry had climbed it, and stood there, barking.

Augustine strolled up.

"Having a little trouble with the dumb friend, bish?" he asked, genially.

The bishop peered down from his eyrie.

"Young man," he said, "save me!"

"Right most indubitably ho!" replied Augustine. "Leave it to me."

Until to-day he had always been terrified of dogs, but now he did not hesitate. Almost quicker than words can tell, he picked up a stone, discharged it at the animal, and whooped cheerily as it got home with a thud. The dog, knowing when he had had enough, removed himself at some forty-five m.p.h.; and the bishop, descending cautiously, clasped Augustine's hand in his.

"My preserver!" said the bishop.

"Don't give it another thought," said Augustine, cheerily. "Always glad to do a pal a good turn. We clergymen must stick together."

"I thought he had me for a minute."

"Quite a nasty customer. Full of rude energy."

The bishop nodded.

"'His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.'—Deuteronomy xxxiv. 7," he agreed. "I wonder if you can direct me to the vicarage? I fear I have come a little out of my way."

"I'll take you there."

"Thank you. Perhaps it would be as well if you did not come in. I have a serious matter to discuss with old Pieface—I mean, with the Rev. Stanley Brandon."

"I have a serious matter to discuss with his daughter. I'll just hang about the garden."

"You are a very excellent young man," said the bishop, as they walked along. "You are a curate, eh?"

"At present. But," said Augustine, tapping his companion on the chest, "just watch

The bishop peered down from his eyrie. "Young man," he said, "save me!"

my smoke. That's all I ask you to do—just watch my smoke."

"I will. You should rise to great heights—to the very top of the tree."

"Like you did just now, eh? Ha,ha!"

"Ha, ha!" said the bishop. "You young rogue!"

He poked Augustine in the ribs.

"Ha, ha, ha!" said Augustine.

He slapped the bishop on the back.

"But all joking aside," said the bishop as they entered the vicarage grounds, "I really shall keep my eye on you and see that you receive the swift preferment which your talents and character deserve. I say to you, my dear young friend, speaking seriously and weighing my words, that the way you picked that dog off with that stone was the smoothest thing I ever saw. And I am a man who always tells the strict truth."

"'Great is truth and mighty above all things.'—Esdras iv. 41," said Augustine.

He turned away and strolled towards the laurel bushes, which were his customary meeting-place with Jane. The bishop went on to the front door and rang the bell.

ALTHOUGH they had made no definite appointment, Augustine was surprised when the minutes passed and no Jane appeared. He did not know that she had been told off by her father to entertain the bishop's wife that morning, and show her the sights of Lower Briskett-in-the-Midden. He waited some quarter of an hour with growing impatience, and was about to leave when suddenly from the house there came to his ears the sound of voices raised angrily.

He stopped. The voices appeared to proceed from a room on the ground floor facing the garden.

Running lightly over the turf, Augustine paused outside the window and listened. The window was open at the bottom, and he could hear quite distinctly.

The vicar was speaking in a voice that vibrated with a strong man's anger.

"Is that so?" said the vicar.

"Yes, it is!" said the bishop.

"Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha! to you, and see how you like it!" rejoined the bishop with spirit.

Augustine drew a step closer. It was plain that Jane's fears had been justified and that there was serious trouble afoot between these two old schoolfellows. He peeped in. The vicar, his hands behind his coat-tails, was striding up and down the carpet, while the bishop, his back to the fireplace, glared defiance at him from the hearth-rug.

"Who ever told you you were an authority on chasubles?" demanded the vicar

"That's all right who told me," retorted the bishop.

"I don't believe you know what a chasuble is."

"Is that so?"

"Well, what is it, then?"

"It's a circular cloak hanging from the shoulders, elaborately embroidered with a pattern and with orphreys. And you can argue as much as you like, young Pieface, but you can't get away from the fact that there are too many orphreys on yours. And what I'm telling you is that you've jolly well got to switch off a few of those orphreys or you'll get it in the neck."

The vicar's eyes glittered furiously.

"Is that so?" he said. "Well, I just won't, so there! And it's like your cheek coming here and trying to high-hat me. You seem to have forgotten that I knew you when you were an inky-faced kid at school, and that, if I liked, I could tell the world one or two things about you which would probably amuse it."

"My past is an open book."

"Is it?" The vicar laughed malevolently. "Who put the white mouse in the French master's desk?"

The bishop started.

"Who put jam in the dormitory prefect's bed?" he retorted.

"Who couldn't keep his collar clean?"

"Who used to wear a dickey?" The bishop's wonderful organ-like voice, whose softest whisper could be heard throughout a vast cathedral, rang out in tones of thunder. "Who was sick at the house supper?"

The vicar quivered from head to foot. His rubicund face turned a deeper crimson.

"You know jolly well," he said, in shaking accents, "that there was something wrong with the turkey. Might have upset anyone."

"The only thing wrong with the turkey was that you ate too much of it. If you had paid as much attention to developing your soul as you did to developing your tummy, you might by now," said the bishop, "have risen to my own eminence."

"Oh, might I?"

"No, perhaps I am wrong. You never had the brain."

The vicar uttered another discordant laugh.

"Brain is good! We know all about your eminence, as you call it, and how you rose to that eminence."

"What do you mean?"

"You are a bishop. How you became one we will not inquire."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. We will not inquire."

"Why won't you inquire?"

"Because," said the vicar, "it is better not!"

The bishop's self-control left him. His face contorted with fury, he took a step forward. And simultaneously Augustine sprang lightly into the room.

"Now, now, now!" said Augustine. "Now, now, now, now, now!"

The two men stood transfixed. They stared at the intruder dumbly.

"Come, come!" said Augustine.

The vicar was the first to recover. He glowered at Augustine.

"What do you mean by jumping through my window?" he thundered. "Are you a curate or a harlequin?"

Augustine met his gaze with an unfaltering eye.

"I am a curate," he replied, with a dignity that well became him. "And, as a curate, I cannot stand by and see two superiors of the cloth, who are moreover old schoolfellows, forgetting themselves. It isn't right. Absolutely not right, my dear old superiors of the cloth."

The vicar bit his lip. The bishop bowed his head.

"Listen," proceeded Augustine, placing a hand on the shoulder of each. "I hate to see you two dear good chaps quarrelling like this."

"He started it," said the vicar, sullenly.

"Never mind who started it." Augustine silenced the bishop with a curt gesture as he made to speak. "Be sensible, my dear fellows. Respect the decencies of debate. Exercise a little good-humoured give-and-take. You say," he went on, turning to the bishop, "that our good friend here has too many orphreys on his chasuble?"

"I do. And I stick to it."

"Yes, yes, yes. But what," said Augustine, soothingly, "are a few orphreys between friends. Reflect! You and our worthy vicar here were at school together. You are bound by the sacred ties of the old Alma Mater. With him you sported on the green. With him you shared a crib and threw inked darts in the hour supposed to be devoted to the study of French. Do these things mean nothing to you? Do these memories touch no chord?" He turned

"Now, now, now!" said Augustine. "Now, now, now, now, now!"

appealingly from one to the other. "Vicar! Bish!"

THE vicar had moved away and was wiping his eyes. The bishop fumbled for a pocket-handkerchief. There was a silence.

"Sorry, Pieface," said the bishop, in a choking voice.

"Shouldn't have spoken as I did, Boko," mumbled the vicar.

"If you want to know what I think," said the bishop, "you are right in attributing your indisposition at the house supper to something wrong with the turkey. I recollect saying at the time that the bird should never have been served in such a condition."

"And when you put that white mouse in the French master's desk," said the vicar, "you performed one of the noblest services to humanity of which there is any record. They ought to have made you a bishop on the spot."

"Pieface!"

"Boko!"

The two men clasped hands.

"Splendid!" said Augustine. "Everything hotsy-totsy now?"

"Quite, quite," said the vicar.

"As far as I am concerned, completely hotsy-totsy," said the bishop. He turned to his old friend solicitously. "You will continue to wear all the orphreys you want, will you not, Pieface?"

"No, no. I see now that I was wrong. From now on, Boko, I abandon orphreys altogether."

"But, Pieface——"

"It's all right," the vicar assured him. "I can take them or leave them alone."

"Splendid fellow!" The bishop coughed to hide his emotion, and there was another silence. "I think, perhaps," he went on, after a pause, "I should be leaving you now, my dear chap, and going in search of my wife. She is with your daughter, I believe, somewhere in the village."

"They are coming up the drive now."

"Ah, yes, I see them. A charming girl, your daughter."

Augustine clapped him on the shoulder.

"Bish," he exclaimed, "you said a mouthful. She is the dearest, sweetest girl in the whole world. And I should be glad, vicar, if you would give your consent to our immediate union. I love Jane with a good man's fervour, and I am happy to inform you that my sentiments are returned. Assure us, therefore, of your approval, and I will go at once and have the banns put up."

The vicar leaped as though he had been stung. Like so many vicars, he had a poor opinion of curates, and he had always regarded Augustine as rather below than above the general norm or level of the despised class.

"What!" he cried.

"A most excellent idea," said the bishop, beaming. "A very happy notion, I call it."

"My daughter!" The vicar seemed dazed. "My daughter marry a curate!"

"You were a curate once yourself, Pieface."

"Yes, but not a curate like that."

"No!" said the bishop. "You were not. Nor was I. Better for us both, had we been. This young man, I would have you know, is the most outstandingly excellent young man I have ever encountered. Are you aware that scarcely an hour ago he saved me with the most consummate address from a large shaggy dog with black spots and a kink in his tail? I was sorely pressed, Pieface, when this young man came up and, with a readiness of resource and an accuracy of aim which it would be impossible to over-praise, got that dog in the short ribs with a rock and sent him flying."

The vicar seemed to be struggling with some powerful emotion. His eyes had widened.

"A dog with black spots?"

"Very black spots. But no blacker, I fear, than the heart they hid."

"And he really plugged him in the short ribs?"

"As far as I could see, squarely in the short ribs."

The vicar held out his hand.

"Mulliner," he said, "I was not aware of this. In the light of the facts which have just been drawn to my attention, I have no hesitation in saying that my objections are removed. I have had it in for that dog since the second Sunday before Septuagesima, when he pinned me by the ankle as I paced beside the river composing a sermon on Certain Alarming Manifestations of the So-Called Modern Spirit. Take Jane. I give my consent freely. And may she be as happy as any girl with such a husband ought to be."

A few more affecting words were exchanged, and then the bishop and Augustine left the house. The bishop was silent and thoughtful.

"I owe you a great deal, Mulliner," he said at length.

"Oh, I don't know," said Augustine. "Would you say that?"

"A very great deal. You saved me from a terrible disaster. Had you not leaped through that window at that precise juncture and intervened, I really believe I should have pasted my dear old friend Brandon in the eye. I was sorely exasperated."

"Our good vicar can be trying at times," agreed Augustine.

"My fist was already clenched, and I was just hauling off for the swing when you checked me. What the result would have been, had you not exhibited a tact and discretion beyond your years, I do not like to think. I might have been unfrocked." He shivered at the thought, though the weather was mild. "I could never have shown my face at the Athenæum again. But, tut, tut!" went on the bishop, patting Augustine on the shoulder, "let us not dwell on what might have been. Speak to me of yourself. The vicar's charming daughter—you really love her?"

"I do, indeed."

The bishop's face had grown grave.

"Think well, Mulliner," he said. "Marriage is a serious affair. Do not plunge into it without due reflection. I myself am a husband, and, though singularly blessed in the possession of a devoted helpmeet, cannot but feel sometimes that a man is better off as a bachelor. Women, Mulliner, are odd."

"True," said Augustine.

"My own dear wife is the best of women. And, as I never weary of saying, a good woman is a wondrous creature, cleaving to the right and the good under all change; lovely in youthful comeliness, lovely all her life in comeliness of heart. And yet——"

"And yet?" said Augustine.

THE bishop mused for a moment. He wriggled a little with an expression of pain, and scratched himself between the shoulder-blades.

"Well, I'll tell you," said the bishop. "It is a warm and pleasant day to-day, is it not?"

"Exceptionally clement," said Augustine.

"A fair, sunny day, made gracious by a temperate westerly breeze. And yet, Mulliner, if you will credit my statement, my wife insisted on my putting on my thick winter woollies this morning. Truly," sighed the bishop, "'as a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.' Proverbs eleven, twenty-one."

"Twenty-two," corrected Augustine.

"I should have said twenty-two. They are made of thick flannel, and I have an exceptionally sensitive skin. Oblige me, my dear fellow, by rubbing me in the small of the back with the ferrule of your stick. I think it will ease the irritation."

"But, my poor dear old bish," said Augustine, sympathetically, "this must not be."

The bishop shook his head ruefully.

"You would not speak so hardily, Mulliner, if you knew my wife. There is no appeal from her decrees."

"Nonsense," cried Augustine, cheerily. He looked through the trees to where the lady bishopess, escorted by Jane, was examining a lobelia through her lorgnette with just the right blend of cordiality and condescension. "I'll fix that for you in a second."

The bishop clutched at his arm.

"My boy! What are you going to do?"

"I'm just going to have a word with your wife and put the matter up to her as a reasonable woman. Thick winter woollies on a day like this! Absurd!" said Augustine. "Preposterous! I never heard such rot."

The bishop gazed after him with a leaden heart. Already he had come to love this young man like a son: and to see him charging so light-heartedly into the very jaws of destruction afflicted him with a deep and poignant sadness. He knew what his wife was like when even the highest in the land attempted to thwart her; and this brave lad was but a curate. In another moment she would be looking at him through her lorgnette: and England was littered with the shrivelled remains of curates at whom the lady bishopess had looked through her lorgnette. He had seen them wilt like salted slugs at the episcopal breakfast-table.

He held his breath. Augustine had reached the lady bishopess, and the lady bishopess was even now raising her lorgnette.

The bishop shut his eyes and turned away. And then—years afterwards, it seemed to him—a cheery voice hailed him: and, turning, he perceived Augustine bounding back through the trees.

"It's all right, bish," said Augustine.

"All—all right?" faltered the bishop.

"Yes. She says you can go and change into the thin cashmere."

The bishop reeled.

"But—but—but what did you say to her? What arguments did you employ?"

"Oh, I just pointed out what a warm day it was and jollied her along a bit——"

"Jollied her along a bit!"

"And she agreed in the most friendly and cordial manner. She has asked me to call at the Palace one of these days."

The bishop seized Augustine's hand.

"My boy," he said in a broken voice, "you shall do more than call at the Palace. You shall come and live at the Palace. Become my secretary, Mulliner, and name your own salary. If you intend to marry, you will require an increased stipend. Become my secretary, boy, and never leave my side. I have needed somebody like you for years."

IT was late in the afternoon when Augustine returned to his rooms, for he had been invited to lunch at the vicarage and had been the life and soul of the cheery little party.

"A letter for you, sir," said Mrs. Wardle, obsequiously.

Augustine took the letter.

"I am sorry to say I shall be leaving you shortly, Mrs. Wardle."

"Oh, sir! If there's anything I can do ——"

"Oh, it's not that. The fact is, the bishop has made me his secretary, and I shall have to shift my toothbrush and spats to the Palace, you see."

"Well, fancy that, sir! Why, you'll be a bishop yourself one of these days."

"Possibly," said Augustine. "Possibly. And now let me read this."

He opened the letter. A thoughtful frown appeared on his face as he read.

My dear Augustine,—

I am writing in some haste to tell you that the impulsiveness of your aunt has led to a rather serious mistake.

She tells me that she dispatched to you yesterday by parcels post a sample bottle of my new Buck-U-Uppo, which she obtained without my knowledge from my laboratory. Had she mentioned what she was intending to do, I could have prevented a very unfortunate occurrence.

Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo is of two grades or qualities—the A and the B. The A is a mild, but strengthening, tonic designed for human invalids. The B, on the other hand, is purely for circulation in the animal kingdom, and was invented to fill a long-felt want throughout our Indian possessions.

As you are doubtless aware, the favourite pastime of the Indian Maharajahs is the hunting of the tiger of the jungle from the backs of elephants; and it has happened frequently in the past that hunts have been spoiled by the failure of the elephant to see eye to eye with its owner in the matter of what constitutes sport.

Too often elephants, on sighting the tiger, have turned and galloped home: and it was to correct this tendency on their part that I invented Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo "B." One teaspoonful of the Buck-U-Uppo "B" administered in its morning bran-mash will cause the most timid elephant to trumpet loudly and charge the fiercest tiger without a qualm.

Abstain, therefore, from taking any of the contents of the bottle you now possess,

And believe me,

Your affectionate uncle,

WILFRED MULLINER.

Augustine remained for some time in deep thought after perusing this communication. Then, rising, he whistled a few bars of the psalm appointed for the twenty-sixth of June and left the room.

Half an hour later a telegraphic message was speeding over the wires.

It ran as follows:—

Wilfred Mulliner,
The Gables,
Lesser Lossingham,
Salop.

Letter received. Send immediately, C.O.D., three cases of the "B." "Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store." —Deuteronomy xxviii. 5.

AUGUSTINE.

"My boy," said the bishop in a broken voice, "you shall do more than call at the Palace. You shall come and live at the Palace."

(*Next month: "Jeeves and the Impending Doom."*)

THE TRYST

By

PERCEVAL GIBBON

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

"I'll run away! That's what I'll do!"

ONE could, with a big brave effort of the imagination, conceive an observer, perched high on the tower of Notre Dame de la Garde—the church of Our Lady of the Look-out, which poises over Marseilles and the sweep of its rock-dotted bay—traversing a telescope. And as a pianist spans the keys to blend their notes into a single chord, so his lens would gather up the two lean youths, sullen and white-faced, who lounged through the throng of the Cannébière; the young man who took his ease in a deck-chair upon the bridge of a little steamer which was coming in past the Château d'If; and the girl in white muslin who sat upon a garden parapet above the Corniche road and swung a foot and swore. A triangle, with sides a couple of miles long and more, but a single and symmetrical figure, for all that, in the geometry of Chance.

"*Zut!*" said the girl who swore. Her vocabulary was weak but her spirit was very willing. "*Sacré bleu!*" She paused and groped. "Damn!" she found, and repeated it twice.

Below her and across the road the land fell away in slopes of lavish summer green, with villas ornate as wedding-cakes thrusting up their stucco turrets and minarets, to the Mediterranean blue which barked below. The garden in which she sat ended at a point some twelve feet above the road; its retaining-wall, of rough-hewn granite, sloped steeply to the wide cobbled gutter, and the top of it made a parapet to the garden. The great morning light of the Midi was over it all.

"I'll go mad," said Annette O'Brien. "I'll kill myself!" Her angry eyes, which had seen some eighteen years of sheltered and lovingly restricted life, sought up and down the road, rising to the left towards the fabled Riviera, sinking to the right towards the cauldron of the city, as though in search of a third resource. They fell, too, upon the surface of the wall that withheld the garden from the road. The only normal issue from the garden was by the great gate of the carriage-drive away to her right, where an inexorable porter had a lodge; but—the wall itself was a gate! It was a superb piece of masonry, rugged as a crag, not much more difficult than a staircase for young limbs. Annette nodded her head twice, slowly.

"I'll run away!"

And thereupon the anger ebbed from her eyes; she became suddenly thoughtful. She was a slender girl, and those who ruled her and served her had so designed the outward fashion of her that the fluffery of muslin did not conceal the litheness and strength of her youth. The French mother whom she had not known had bequeathed

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her the brown hair with the shimmer of bronze in it—though not the bob in which she wore it; and her eyes were the blue eyes of her Irish father, whom she only dimly remembered. Paris grafted upon Limerick, the clear and daring vision of the Gaul enlarged to scan the dream-world of the Celt—these were what her Uncle St. Laure and Mme. St. Laure, his wife, had taken to their bosoms and nourished to an age when marriage negotiations are in order. That very afternoon there was to be a visit from the parents of Gaston Masurier, he of the sleek black hair and fat pink cheeks, the shoe-button eyes. She would not be there—it would not have been *dans les formes;* but her fortune would be there, her education, her accomplishments, all her marketable assets except her soul and the young body which it fired and fretted.

"That's what I'll do," she said. "To-night!" She was murmuring to herself in English. "Me and a suit-case! I'll go to London and get work. I—I'll"—vista after vista ran across her horizon; the last flashed like a revelation—"I'll go on the stage!"

That, of course, clinched it. She sat up on the parapet, every difficulty solved, her face shining. What does eighteen need more than a goal? The glow of purpose was still upon her when her aunt called her from the veranda.

Mme. St. Laure was all that a good, wealthy, and conventional woman in the forties should be. It is not evil or absurd to be plump, with more than a shading of black moustache, to be lavish with face-powder and architectural as to the coiffure. Perhaps the Queen of Sheba was like that; we have no evidence to show that she wasn't. And with it all she loved Annette with a fussy, anxious pride in her prettiness and spirit, the while she strove with guidance and restraint to remake her after her own image.

"It will be lunch-time in a few minutes," she called, in her deep round voice with the full vowels of the South. "And again you have no hat, in all this sun! You, with your complexion! Come in, dear, at once, before you are tanned to leather!"

Annette rose and went across the garden towards her, smiling a little. Already, in the light of her inspiration, she had a sense of kindly superiority to this well-intentioned aunt of hers, as of one to whom vivid experiences are due and imminent.

"I like the sun," she said. "There are some people who take sun-baths all over."

"Yes," said Mme. St. Laure; "dogs and cats do, also. And fishes do not wear bathing costumes. But of Christians we do not talk such nonsense. Supposing you were to come out freckled like the belly of a quail! I tell you, for the thousandth time——"

"The millionth, at least," murmured Annette, but still she smiled.

"A young girl cannot be too careful of herself at all times. And for you, now especially——"

Mme. St. Laure broke off and eyed her niece keenly.

"Now especially?" prompted Annette.

"H'm!" Mme. St. Laure was doubtful. In her experience, girls always knew what was toward when the formal visitors were expected and they themselves were packed off elsewhere. But with Annette it was difficult to be sure; her disconcerting frankness in many matters went with an equally disconcerting *naïveté* upon many others.

"Yes," said Mme. St. Laure, firmly. "Now especially, since you insist. And it is I who will tell you why when the fit time arrives. But, in the meantime—lunch."

"Yes," said Annette. "There will be time enough to learn to go without lunch."

"You are inexplicable," said her aunt. "Is it growing pains? I ask myself. But come"

Cousin Clarice—she was the cousin of Aunt St. Laure—a tall spinster, very bony, with a mobile face and heavy eyebrows, was at lunch. She drew and painted a little, played accompaniments, and could join acceptably in a conversation.

"I watched you while you were musing on the wall, Annette," she said, with her toothy smile. "I wish I could have sketched you like that. You needed only one thing."

"She needed a hat," said Mme. St. Laure.

"Yes, of course," agreed Cousin Clarice. "But I wasn't thinking of that just then. Something else!"

"What did I need?" demanded Annette.

"A Romeo," smiled Cousin Clarice.

"Yes," said Annette, calmly. "It would certainly make things more interesting."

Then Mme. St. Laure intervened crushingly and the conversation broke off, snapped like the stem of Brother Laurence's lily. Annette heard her without interruption, but the glow was still in her face.

At the other points of the triangle, too, there was talking. Nothing is done in this world without talk; that is why there is so little done. The two lean youths who had lounged at the foot of the Cannébière, through which Europe surges into and out of Africa, found themselves a table outside a *café* where none sat close by, and ordered beer. There was between them that likeness which one finds between men who practise some warping and strenuous trade. All policemen look like policemen, all sailors look like sailors, and all kings look like Labour leaders, or try to. These two were white

with more than an indoor pallor; their lips were thin and scarlet; their eyes were still and dire like those of a snake. They were reptiles.

The waiter had laid their drinks before them and retired before they spoke.

"It is time we got to work again," said Toto.

Charlot drank, and nodded with the glass yet at his lips.

"Luck to find a job," he agreed, when he set it down. "Might do it clean and get away without being seen, even. They saw too much of us up in the *faubourgs*."

"Yes," said Toto; "they did. Therefore, here——"

Charlot nodded again. "Understood!" he said. "The old way—it's the only way! The old woman will be lucky not to wake."

Even their speech had the character of an utterance divorced from decent usage. In their mouths the cut-diamond clarity of French was dulled and fouled; every third word was in the *Langue Verte*—the argot of the Paris criminal. These were refugees from a city stung to indignation by a swift series of robberies and murders in its ill-guarded suburbs. The Paris bandit does not leave a cloud of witnesses to identify him; to set eye on him is death. Toto and Charlot had cut a wide swathe in the Passy neighbourhood; a notable strangling of an old woman and her old servant in their beds had made things too hot for them; and now the slums to the west of Marseilles harbour sheltered them and the villas of the Corniche dangled rewards before them.

They were men of few words. Their reconnoitring, their planning, had all been done very thoroughly. Mme. St. Laure's jewellery was known to them; also the plan of the bedrooms at her villa. There remained only to while away the day till the hour should come for the scaling of that rough-hewn wall, the entry, the robbery—then, what must happen would happen.

Toto emptied his glass in one draught. "It will be hot this afternoon," he remarked, rising. "I shall sleep."

And the truth is he slept, quietly, reposefully, like a baby, unconscious of sin, aware only of appetite. And Charlot slept beside him; while M. St. Laure, who had returned, shrewd and jolly, from his office for the occasion, and Mme. St. Laure prepared for their visitors. And the little steamer, measuredly thudding in from the South, put Monte Cristo's island prison behind her and headed in to join them.

SHE was as unbeautiful as a truck. She was just one of those little thousand-ton tramps which move like shuttles upon the seas of the world and earn the dividends at an economical seven knots an hour. Upon her bridge, Captain Sampson, her master, already rigged for the shore in board-stiff blue serge and black bowler hat, leaned against the rail and watched the harbour pilot and exchanged talk with the flannel-clad young man who considered the lilies from a deck-chair beside the wheel-house.

"Change your mind, skipper," the young man was urging. "Just your missus and you and me! A bite of dinner up at the Londres to forget that cook of yours. I'm sure Mrs. Sampson would like it."

The captain shook his large, grey-thatched head.

"Thankin' you all the same, sir," he replied. "Can't be done this trip. I want to whip that hundred sacks of trash out of her as quick as the derricks can shift it, an' sweeten up my bunkers and get away again. Breakin' a passage like that"—the captain was voicing a grievance—"for a pocketful of plain dirt like you could dig out of any backyard, an' manifestin' it as 'samples for assay'—well——"

"Probably worth more than all the rest of your cargo with the ship thrown in," interrupted the young man cheerfully. "But, coming back to more important matters, I s'pose I'd better not arrange to sleep ashore to-night?"

"Not unless you're fond of early rising," answered the captain. "I'll be hull-under before you've finished manicuring your toe-nails."

"I know now what is meant by a half-afloat," mourned the young man. "What with your missus stealing my books, an' that cook of yours practising chemistry on me, and you wearing my socks——"

The captain grinned. "Better say all that to the missus, sir," he said. "She'll have your answer for you. It's been as good as a tonic to her, havin' somebody on board to fight with."

"I'll go and say it now," said the other, and rose with the needful struggle from his low-pitched deck-chair.

He had come aboard at Aden, where the *Crowleigh*—that was the name of the little steamer—lay coaling. He had given his name as Denis Forester, and beyond that he had explained himself only by the statement that he had been "looking round a bit," and proposed to travel home to London in the *Crowleigh*. This in spite of the fact that the big mail steamers flit into and out of that cinder-dump, Aden, like taxicabs at the doors of an hotel, and it was plain that he did not lack money. But there was not wanting in him, either, that perfect passport, a cheer and frankness of countenance, the great gift of being likeable at sight, and

the obvious marks of caste and breeding. In age he was something short of thirty, as in stature he was something short of six feet, thin in the flank, warmly sun-tanned, and ready with smiles.

"But what d'you pick out this old scow for?" Captain Sampson had demanded. "We've got no passenger certificate, ye know. Iron decks and all—in the Red Sea! I'm askin' you—what does it look like?"

"Looks like love at first sight, doesn't it?" suggested Mr. Forester. He smiled openly at the plump missus where she sat listening under the smoke-grimed poop awning.

"Take him, Jim!" said that lady, promptly. "He'll find out what iron decks are like. Sign him on as lamp-trimmer, shillin' a month! He can have the spare cabin."

Mr. Forester thanked her with a bow. The fare was arranged by the captain diffidently mentioning a figure, and the passenger, who was to "sign on" as lamp-trimmer, meeting it with immediate agreement and prompt payment. The two of them watched him as he departed shoreward to fetch his baggage.

"Queer, all the same, Lizzie," said the captain, doubtfully.

The missus shook her head. "Queer to *us*, 'cos we'd make a bee-line for a cool cabin and a quick run in a mail-boat," she said. "But him—mail-boats are no more to him than bum-boats are to us."

Neither of them had met hitherto the true nomad who leaves his safe abode to go forth into the world and up and down in it for the love that he bears to it and its diversity of creatures. Since then they had shown him the character of iron decks in the Red Sea—the lid of a burning, fiery furnace, which blistered the feet through the soles of one's shoes, and on which the heat dazzle stood like smoke all day. They had fed him on canned stuff and salt stuff, manhandled by a Eurasian cook; and throughout it all he had preserved his humour and his equanimity. Ever since Moses the Red Sea has been biting off more than it could chew.

He stood at the rail as the *Crowleigh* made fast to her wharf, waiting for the captain and taking his first view in three years of Europe. The hills behind the city showed their mounting slopes of green, already parched by the splendid sun, while the city itself glowed and frothed with movement, thriving noisily like a beehive on a hot day. Close at hand lay the sullen sea-front of those slums which for vileness have no equal between Shanghai and Port Said; but for them the night is the time of blossom; in the day they lie couched, smouldering, pregnant with obscene fires. Further to the east he could see the jetty of the Yacht Club, where one may eat to surfeit of the best *bouillabaisse* in the world, in some of the best company. He remembered one time in particular when——

"Ready for the shore, sir?" It was the captain, his breast-pocket bulging with papers, and he troubled to remember no further.

"Aching for it," he answered, and, raising his hat to the missus, he swung a leg over the rail.

"Well, sir," said the captain, when they reached the parting of their ways, "you've got your afternoon and your evenin' before you, but I'd be aboard by six in the morning if I was you."

"Fine broad idea you've got of an evening," said Forester. "Better hire a man with a wheelbarrow to bring me down to the wharf, I suppose? No wonder your wife insists on sailing with you!"

"Well, you insisted too," retorted the captain. "So long, sir."

"See you by six," said the other. "Have a derrick ready to hoist me in after you've bailed me out. So long!"

And he departed, with long, easy strides, to the Cannébière, with its hotels and its shops and its *cafés* and the wonderful variety of its people.

EVERY traveller knows that a man may be alone without being lonely. It needs but tolerance and curiosity to make the whole world one's companion; but even the most complaisant companion may pall after a while. Lunch, some shopping, a walk, two baths—a hot one and a cold one—a lounge upon the *terrasse* of a *café*, brought him passably through to dinner; but the end of dinner left him stranded with an evening paper and a cigar upon the shores of an empty evening. He scraped acquaintance with a chubby, swarthy little man in a *café* who would speak English, comic English that was amusing for just five minutes and then collapsed into dreariness. Ten o'clock; he felt full of food and very wakeful. Well, it was a fine night; no moon, but a very delirium of stars, and a little breeze that breathed in from the bay, cool and refreshing. A walk was indicated, obviously, a real walk on good responsive earth to take the taste of iron decks out of his feet.

He rose, paid the waiter, and bade his new acquaintance farewell. "You speak English wonderfully," he said. "But I have to be going."

The chubby little man's face creased in a flattered grin. "Ah, vunderfool, you say?

Yes, I know myself in ze languages. But, mistaire——"

His voice, that gurgled up from the fatness of his throat, sank to a confidential note.

"You find me 'ere all the evenings. By this hour—always. So now, this evening, you len' me twenty francs, an' to-morrow——"

Forester nodded. "*Touché!*" he said. "You speak English even more wonderfully than I thought. Here's your twenty francs; you've earned it."

He laughed a little as he swung out of the crowded street and made for the foot of that uphill coast road of which Marseilles is as childishly proud as of the Cannébière. It swings aloft in loops and curves of inspired engineering, straddling the heights over the sea, with woods and fields and vineyards and gardens sloping to it from the landward side. It is theatrical, with long moments of purest poetry; it is too good to be true; it is the Corniche.

"See you by six," said Forester. "Have a derrick ready to hoist me in after you've bailed me out. So long!"

The triangle was a triangle no longer. Its points were merging into a blob.

It was about half-past eleven when our Miss Annette O'Brien came forth from the villa to the garden. She had dined with her uncle and aunt and Cousin Clarice and they had frightened her. They were so kind, so complacent; they approved of themselves so obviously; something like a sense of good work well done was in their smiles and in their appetites. They reminded her of a cat which has caught and killed its mouse and will presently set to and eat it. But they asked no questions of her; she, her tastes and her wishes were being taken for granted. Next day the good news was to be broken to her. One can fight an enemy to the death; but a friend, three friends, loving, sedulous in their care for her interests, honest, stupid, and determined—with what weapon shall one fight them?

"No moon!" breathed Annette.

She was going forth to the conquest of the world in a tweed coat and skirt, with a thousand francs pinned in her bosom and a suit-case that was altogether too heavy. The stars had light enough to give her a shadow on the lawn, a misshapen thing that bobbed like a ball on a water-jet as she staggered over the shaven grass with the suit-case which she purposed to carry into Marseilles. She reached the parapet panting, and heaved her burden on it. This was going to be hard, but that was as it should be. Early struggles alone made the path to

glory authentic. Had not Bernhardt and Duse and Ellen Terry in their day——

She pricked her ears; it seemed to her that she had heard a whisper near at hand. She stood, frozen in her place, and listened.

Ten seconds passed, and she heard it again. "*C'est ici!*" it sounded like. "It is here!" It came, if it came from anywhere but her fancy, from beneath her, at the foot of the wall. Then: "*Allons-y!* Let's go to it!" and a scuffling noise.

With a hand on the suit-case to steady herself, she craned forward to look over the parapet. It was dark under the wall, and for a moment she distinguished nothing. Then, her eyes acclimatized to the darkness, she saw in amazement a black shape that moved upon the face of the wall, slowly, as if with precaution to make no noise, but steadily, pulling itself up, with long black tentacles that reached for the hand-holds on the rugged stones. It was directly below and rising to her. In the roadway, another black shape stood and turned as though it looked first this way and then that.

"*Oh, mais*——"

Involuntarily, automatically, she started back from this unknown, this unguessable horror of the night. And as she started, she thrust at the suit-case. It toppled: it fell!

She was back again at once at the parapet, but she was not quick enough to see that perfect fall. She only heard it. There was a thud and a startled squeal, a crash, and another thud, then the beginnings of an agonized howl which tailed out into gaspings and gurglings, such as a drowning man might produce or a man who has fallen on his back into a cobbled gutter and had the wind stamped out of him by a heavy suit-case. But she did see the second shape, the one who had kept guard in the road, in frantic flight towards Marseilles. That was Charlot; his colleague, Toto, showed as something indeterminate which jerked about like a stranded fish and then lay still.

"Have I hurt you?" called Annette, softly.

There was no answer. After a minute of consideration she sat upon the parapet, turned round, and clambered down.

The man lay on his back motionless, his face upturned. Annette bent over him and soon she could see him. There was no blood, no violent distortion of any limb, nothing she could stanch with her handkerchief or ease with her hands. But his face! It was in that she had her first view of the possibilities of the world in which she lived. She knew, of course, that it was not populated with St. Laures alone, that its ordinariness was leavened and spiced with rare extremes of evil and virtue. And here, paper-white, high in the cheek and pointed at the chin, its narrow brow made narrower by the brim of the cap, were the dire print and ensign of one of those with whom she must travel her chosen road.

The strangeness and horror of it fascinated her for a minute or two; then she rose, lifted her heavy bag, and turned to follow the Corniche down towards Marseilles.

THIS was one of the Corniche's nights for seeing life.

Five hundred yards below Annette's wall, Denis Forester, going easily but already on the point of turning back, paused in his stride at the sound of footsteps that came to meet him, urgent and rapid, as of one who ran. There was a bend in the way just before him, and he stopped to see the runner.

The man came pelting down in disordered flight with the gait of panic. Forester, with an instant sense of something wrong, stepped out into the road to meet him. At sight of him the runner swerved violently, uttered sounds of frenzy, brandished an arm, and came on.

The starlight slid and glimmered upon what he upheld with that moving arm. A narrow blade, gripped ready for the plunging stab; Forester sprang aside. Charlot did not change his course; he wanted nothing but a clear way to freedom. He dashed on, spurred to fresh speed by this encounter; and as he would have passed, Forester lunged with his stick between the man's flying feet.

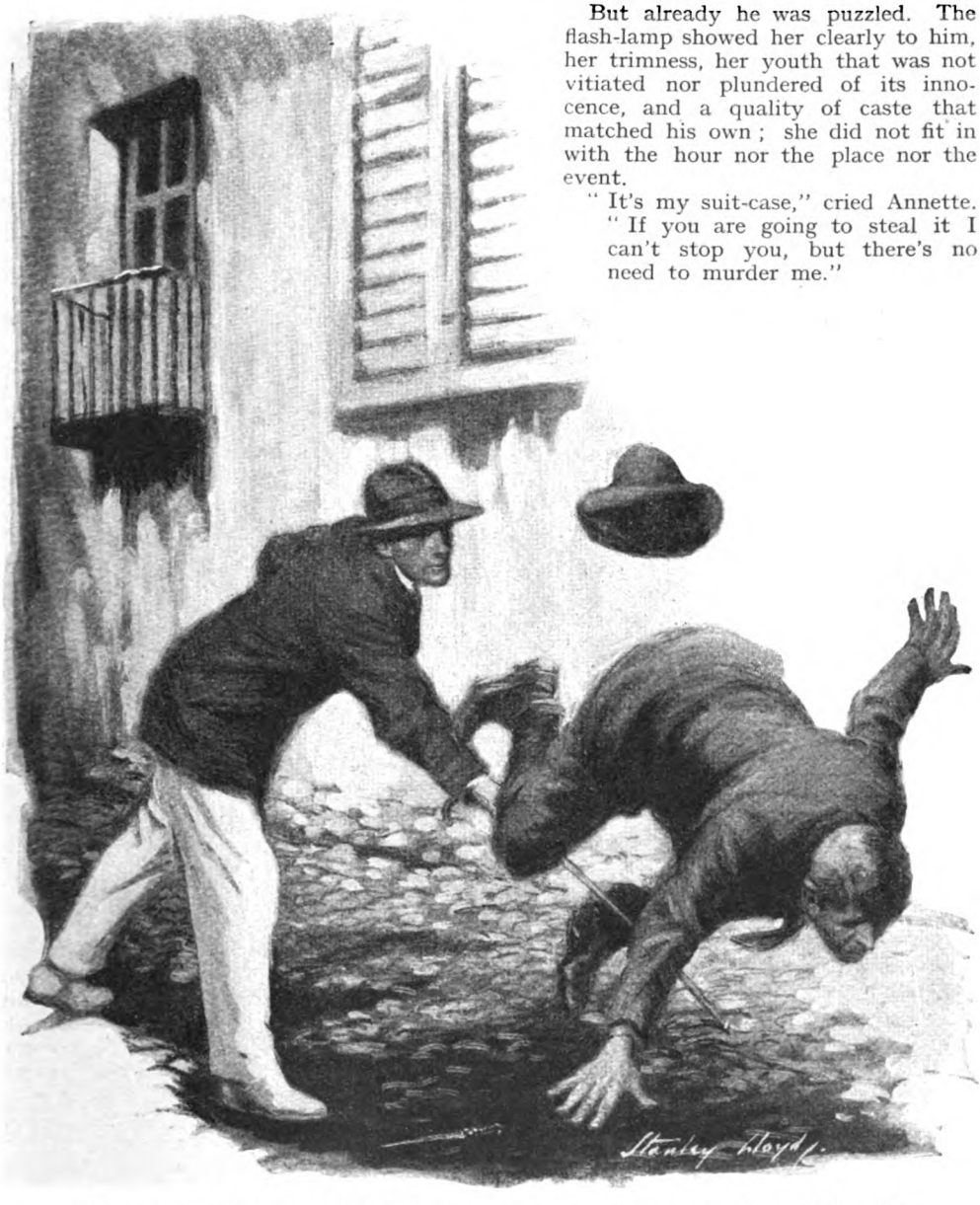
There was a scream, and Charlot seemed to soar from the ground in a tangle of mad limbs, travel through the air for a yard or two, and land again as inertly as a sack. The knife slid across the road to Forester's feet; he stooped and picked it up.

It was still in his hand when he rose from examining the wreck of Charlot. A brief search of that *débris* had yielded him an automatic and a helpful flash-lamp. It showed him all he wanted to know. He had downed this man on the evidence of the knife; he left him lying, smashed and crumpled, for the thing he was. And then he was aware that close by another figure had appeared and stood watching him.

He had the bare knife in his hand and the still body at his feet.

He flashed the lamp upon the new-comer. He understood nothing, but he was ready for battle.

"It's a girl!" he exclaimed aloud. Then he saw the suit-case where she had let it down beside her, quickly added two and two, and got the answer wrong. But the girl spoke first.



Forester lunged with his stick between the man s flying feet. The knife slid across the road.

But already he was puzzled. The flash-lamp showed her clearly to him, her trimness, her youth that was not vitiated nor plundered of its innocence, and a quality of caste that matched his own; she did not fit in with the hour nor the place nor the event.

"It's my suit-case," cried Annette. "If you are going to steal it I can't stop you, but there's no need to murder me."

"You have killed him?" she asked in French.

"Not quite, I think," he replied in the same tongue. "A friend of yours, I presume?"

"What?" The girl started. "Friend? Friend of mine?"

"I suppose so," he answered. "Otherwise you'd hardly be carrying that suit-case for him, would you?"

"No need at all," he agreed. "But—well, see how it is! This man"—he indicated the not-quite-dead body—"comes charging down the road and at sight of me he draws this knife. So I trip him up and here he is. Then you arrive with a heavy bag. Perhaps I'm mixing things up; but if that is the case, hadn't you better put me right?"

"You are—you are an *Agent de la Sûreté?*" quavered Annette.

"Eh?" He pondered an instant. "A crook would know I wasn't," he reflected. "No," he answered her. "I'm not a detective. I'm just an Englishman on his travels and——"

She interrupted him with a little cry. "An Englishman!" she repeated in English. "I'm going to England. This is my luggage. And I think this man and the other are thieves."

"There is another?" he asked, quickly. "Where did you see him? Please tell me the whole thing; this may be awfully serious."

"Well," began Annette, "he was climbing up our wall and I tipped the suit-case over on him. You see, I was going to climb down when I saw him. And this one here ran away. You understand, don't you?"

"Not quite," said Forester. "But we mustn't lose time. Why were you going to climb down a wall?"

Question and answer did the trick. Presently he had an outline idea of the matter. There was no time for more. It was plain, at least, that there was another Apache up the road outside an unguarded house.

"I'll carry that suit-case for you," he said. "Come along and show me where you left the fellow."

TOTO'S solar plexus had resumed work when they arrived; his spine was not broken and the back of his head was not crushed in, though they felt as if they were. He had rolled over on his side and propped himself on one elbow. He had not the least notion what had hit him nor how.

The shaft of light from the flash-lamp beat him down upon his back again.

"Charlot?" he said, feebly.

"It isn't Charlot," answered Forester. "Lie as you are if you don't want to be knocked about." Toto groaned. "And now we'll have a look at your ironmongery."

His equipment proved to be the same as that of Charlot, a knife, an automatic, and a flash-lamp.

"Lie still!" commanded Forester. "If you try to get up you'll be kicked." He moved away and examined the surface of the wall with the lamp. "As good as a ladder," he said aloud. "You'll have no difficulty in getting up again, and between us we can hoist the bag. Can you get back to bed without being heard?"

She leant with one hand upon the wall. "But I'm not going back to bed," she protested. "I'm running away. You don't know what'll happen if I go back to bed."

"I know what will happen if you don't, though," he said. "Somebody will find you; I hope it will be the police; and won't you look a fool when they bring you back and hand you over and take a receipt for you? But if it isn't the police, it may be some man like this scoundrel lying there. There's no getting away, my dear young lady. Can't you believe that I know what I'm talking about?"

"But——"

"What is it really that you're running away from? Is anybody being cruel to you? What is it? Whatever it is, it can be put right."

"I want to go on the stage," she answered, diffidently. "I suppose you think that's outrageous and silly, but I want to all the same."

"Well, why shouldn't you?" he said. "I've got a cousin on the stage. Why shouldn't you be anything you like, if you can? Only—I'm dead sure that the first step towards it is going quietly back to bed."

She shook her head. "There's something else."

He smiled in the dark. "I was sure there was," he said. "Will you care to tell me?"

She was silent for some moments. "We sha'n't see each other again," she said, "so I may as well tell you, and you'll see for yourself that I'm right."

"As to that——" He stopped. "Go ahead!"

And he got the true inwardness of it as Annette knew it, the matter of M. Gaston Masurier, of the attitude of her uncle and aunt.

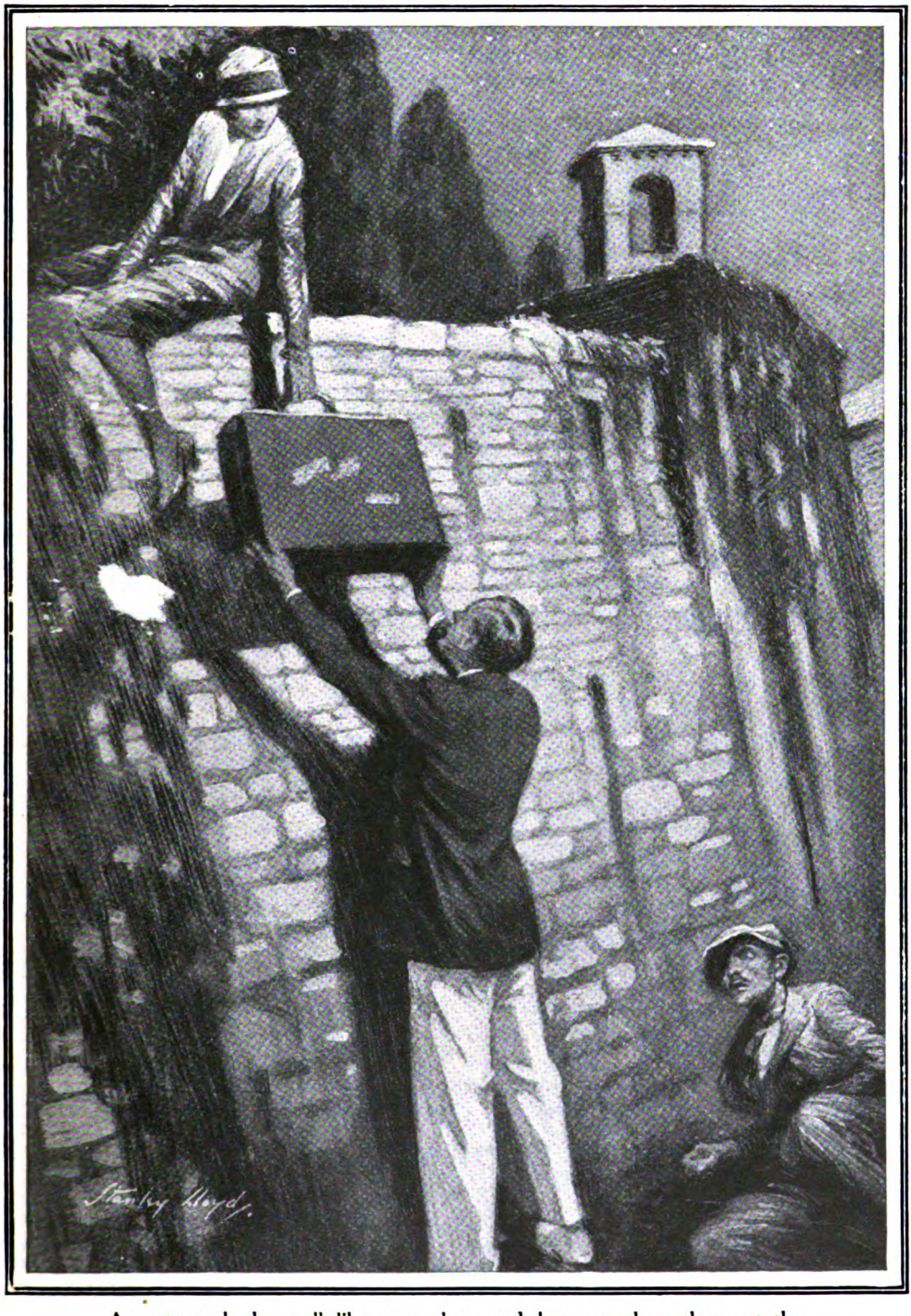
"It comes down to this, then," he said, when she had done; "you're to be tied hand and foot, gagged or drugged, and married by force?" She made a sound of remonstrance. "Because, otherwise, there is no country in Europe where a girl can be married against her will."

"But you don't know my aunt!"

"I probably shall before long. It isn't your aunt you've got to deal with; Gaston's your man. You're not afraid of him, are you? You described him as a 'nasty little bladder of a man'; don't you feel equal to pricking the bladder and letting the gas out of Gaston? Wouldn't it be rather fun?"

She shook her head. "I've got too much money," she said. "That's what he wants to marry. But why did you say you'd probably meet aunt before long?"

"She'll want to see me, I expect," he answered. "She'll want to meet her preserver, naturally. This fellow lying here and the other sportsman down the road have got to be accounted for; so after you're up and



Annette took the wall like a monkey, and between them they got the suit-case up.

in, I'm going to the gate to rouse the house and take all the credit for myself. I'm a really good liar when I get started."

She sighed. "I suppose——" she began and stopped. "I can always run away again and arrange things better," she said.

"Of course you can," he said. "And now you'd better be getting up the wall and get ready to receive the suit-case when I lift it to you. Then I'll give you five minutes to get into the house and upstairs, and afterwards you'll come down in a dressing-gown and slippers to hear aunt saying she wished she'd got a son like me."

"Then I won't say 'good night,'" she suggested.

"Not till aunt has introduced us," he smiled.

Annette took the wall like a monkey, and between them they got the suit-case up. Toto in the gutter must have had his own thoughts; he had a worm's-eye view of the whole proceedings and had understood not a word. He put his own construction on the matter. He spoke:—

"Spoilt your little affair, did I?" he said. "Unfortunate, *hein?* But I could not know that you and your girl ('*garsse*' was the word he used) had fixed on to-night for your manœuvres. For such an accident it is enough to be trampled in the belly and beaten about the head with a rock. There is no need of gendarmes to hear your story—and mine."

"We'll see," answered Forester. "Your story is a lie, and it won't be believed. So is mine, and it will. Now don't try to run or I'll shoot you with your own pistol."

He moved towards the gate, and presently the big bell within woke and raved plangently, Lights went up in the villa; the concierge came shouting forth. Annette in her bedroom smiled and hurried her dressing-gown toilet. Toto in his gutter also smiled; he smiled seldom, Toto.

"Charlot! I hope they have got Charlot too. Charlot thought I was going to divide with him. Poor Charlot!"

"SEND the steward up with his baggage, Lizzie," said Captain Sampson. "I had a feeling he wouldn't come."

"An' I've got a feeling—it's only a feeling," said the missus—"that he's got something better to do than gaddin' about the world at his age—a boy like him!"

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 160.

UPRIGHT a name on either side we view:
Poet is *one*, poem and maiden *two*.

1. Makes revolution; often, too, the end,
   When after five and forty, 'twill portend.
2. Excess of hands light task would fail to make,
   Twenty per cent. reduction they must take.
3. Observe, now, one of five we do not meet.
   Add half a saint, and all will be complete.
4. A metal, with the mortal who is here,
   Could, rearranged, as Surrey town appear.
5. In port whose name suggests a ruddy glow
   Chatham was interested years ago.
6. Restore its verb, 'twas first in bygone scheme;
   A number give, 'tis half an English stream.
7. Who lost two sons has also here lost wit.
   Old play and novel point the way to it.
8. The dead proclaimed the place, the living heard.
   Here we remove a letter from the word.
9. A farmer, mountaineer, republican,
   And this—'tis more than odd—reveals your man.
10. Change and decay in all around I see;
    One letter lost, 'tis all the world to me.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 160 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on November 10th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 159.

(The Third of the Series.)

IF tired of Parliament, and ease
Appeals to you, apply for these.

1. O'er fair Cornubia's land I fly;
   No aeroplane, a bird am I.
2. Here is a sea-washed piece of land which
   Recalls at once the name of Sandwich.
3. The love that is too hot and strong
   Burns soon to waste, as says the song.
4. Praise is his name and due—and yet
   Half martyr and half martinet.
5. By flood and fortune treated ill,
   He lost his family and mill.
6. Behold the ancient boundary
   Of Normandy and Brittany.
7. Fair-skinned and of a ruddy hue?
   The epithet applies to you.
8. How many noses have you seen?
   Twice as many of these, I ween.

KING COLE.

1. C	houg	H
2. H	onolul	U
3. I	nfatuatio	N
4. L	au	D
5. T	ullive	R
6. E	pt	E
7. R	ubicun	D
8. N	ostril	S

NOTE.—Light 5. The Mill on the Floss.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

From the Diary of a Dramatist

"RESTING"

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by
H. M. BROCK, R.I.

THE word "resting" is perhaps the most tragic in the dictionary of an actor. It is also the most misleading. There is very little rest, either of mind or body, for a member in the rank and file of the actor's craft who finds himself out of a job—unless of course he has had the more and more unusual good luck to have been in a long engagement. In such an event, becoming rarer every day, except in the case of musical plays, he can look with a certain complacency on the immediate present and the not too distant future, because of a comfortable balance in the bank.

To the long-established star, the actor or actress who is in the habit of drawing a too large salary as well as a percentage of the gross receipts, the word "resting" conveys nothing but its Websterly definition, viz.: "ceasing to move or act; ceasing to be moved or agitated; lying; leaning; standing; depending or relying." Any of these attitudes may be adopted by these particular and not too numerous artistes in their country houses while they search among a stack of eagerly submitted plays for one with an attractive part.

To the vast majority of the profession, however, the end of a run invariably spells the beginning of anxiety and the antithesis of the word which wears a refreshing implication that is not borne out in fact. Once an actor always an actor, and with few exceptions the followers of Thespis do nothing but look for work when they are open to engagement. But in the process of looking for work they work very hard indeed. If they belong to the male persuasion they haunt theatrical clubs and, metaphorically speaking, keep their ears to the ground. In other words, they snatch at the hint of an impending production as a squirrel snatches at nuts. They haunt the agents' offices daily and follow the round of managerial sanctums with ever-wearying feet. The members of the gentle sex have no clubs of this sort, and so rely upon the agents to bring to an end their unrestful periods of leisure and put them back into work.

How these charming people manage to live during the sometimes long hiatus between one play and another is a mystery to me. Butchers and bakers have to be paid and laundresses cannot live upon air. Rooms, however modest, have their rents attached, and the owners of delicatessen shops are not more charitably inclined than tailors, with their useful irons, or the proprietors of other shops, to which frail humanity must head from time to time. And yet it is true to say that actors and actresses manage, by a process known only to themselves, to look as spruce and well turned out while out of work as when in the enjoyment of a prosperous run.

There are, of course, many ways that are wholly unknown to the public in which these inveterate Micawbers, who spend so great a part of their lives in waiting for something to turn up, meet the horrid requirements of relentless fate. There is, for instance, the histrionic habit that is known as "touching" someone down. The generosity of the profession is such that the actor in work deliberately sets aside so much of his weekly salary as a sinking fund for his

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friends. Every night as he emerges from the stage door he is prepared to hand out small but welcome sums to his brothers of the grease-paint who dart out of the shadows with an outstretched hand or who wait at the club for his arrival.

Then there are the pawnshops, where the fruits of luckier days are deposited with an inelastic "uncle" when the sun is behind the clouds. There are also certain managers, grateful for former favours, who may be relied upon to make advances to those actors in times of stress who have served them well and loyally in the past. Dramatists are on the list, too, and in London especially, when one of them has the temerity to enter the Green Room Club, he immediately becomes like a honeycomb to a swarm of bees. It is a remarkable thing that, whereas certain actors can always be relied upon to memorize their lines, they have the most faulty memories when it comes to the question of loans.

IN the course of a long experience of actors and their way of living I have met several, however, who are not content to rest during the process of enforced leisure. There is, for instance, the case of one who had made a certain reputation for himself in the provinces after having played for several years in repertoire and in the touring companies sent out from London, in which he took leading parts. Having a delicate wife and several children, it was quite impossible for him to carry on when he was not fortunate enough to be engaged, and so, being a great admirer of Thackeray, he adopted the practice of the hero of one of that great master's stories and swept a crossing. Very carefully made-up to represent a dilapidated gentleman of three-score years and ten, and assuming an air of quiet dignity and good breeding, he posted himself at the corner of one of the busiest streets in Liverpool, dressed in a neat accumulation of rags. His make-up was so perfect that it could not be detected even in the daylight. His attitude was so charming, so modest, and so courageous that the police permitted him to use his broom in order to make a clean pathway across a generally muddy street. He never begged. He never by any chance whined. In fact, he never uttered a word except, perhaps, to say "Good morning" or "Good afternoon." He coughed a little now and then in a most realistic manner and seemed to be suffering from a steady attack of lumbago. Extremely anxious that the busy passers-by should be able to manipulate the crossing without getting their boots dirty, he was always intensely surprised and grateful for any small sum that might be forced upon him. He was so successful in conveying the impression that he was, at least, a retired colonel, or a man who once had possessed a beautiful country house, that he very soon surrounded himself with an atmosphere of romance. Old ladies, without a single lie from him, built him into a story more moving and pathetic than any appearing within covers in the local libraries. Business men who hurried from the stations in the morning and back to the stations at night were quite sure, by the time that he had become a familiar figure, that he was an ex-master of foxhounds or a Beau Brummell down on his luck.

No part that he ever played on the stage became him so well as the one that he played in life. It was, of course, a part which demanded a good physique. His was a draughty corner. Wet and fine he held his place. His job was even more obviously paradoxical and pathetic when there was no mud to sweep away than when, on those rare occasions of decent weather, he made a path through the dust.

By these means he collected the quite unprincely salary of four or five shillings a day, and this enabled him at least to keep his end up, pay the rent of his very modest rooms, and supply his family with the mere necessities of life. When an engagement came along he disappeared from his post, of course, and was greatly missed. His return, after varying lengths of time, more and more shabby and feeble, but always with the same delightful smile, was a very welcome one. He pursued this scheme for several years, I believe, and when, at last, thankful for the opportunity of being in regular work, he accepted an appointment as local manager of a motion-picture theatre outside Liverpool, he died. I mean he died so far as his crossing-sweeper part was concerned—remaining a mystery. It was lucky that he did not take with him into his more prosperous times a tendency to asthma or bronchitis, and it is to be hoped that his children grew up with his own inestimable faculty of snowing brown when they were unable to snow white.

The female members of the chorus, especially in America, who have every right to call themselves actresses as well as to add the word "gymnast" to their qualifications, are frequently to be seen, when out of engagements, as ushers, as waitresses in restaurants, and as manikins in the smart dressmakers' shops. It would be better for them, perhaps, if they stuck permanently to employment of that sort, with regular hours and regular wages, in which there is exercise enough. But the lure of the theatre, once felt, is difficult to shake off, and whenever the opportunity offers back they go to the stage.

THERE are not many instances among well-known actors, so far as I know, of those who have set themselves to prosaic tasks during periods of unemployment. Art is a severe task-mistress, and demands, or is given the reputation of demanding, the whole time and devotion of her votaries. There is, however, the case of one, for several years in great request, who played for me some years ago. A tall man with a large, bland face and pompous features, an impressive manner, and that strange cross between familiarity and respectfulness which is generally supposed to belong to butlers and valets, he had been cast for these particular parts in a series of comedies. In the eyes of both managers and agents he was the ideal type. Without the smallest trouble, therefore, he walked from theatre to theatre and from play to play as Judson or Simpson, Sunbury or Stagg. He was a well-educated man and his enunciation was perfect. His accent, too, was irreproachable, so that when it became part of his duty to drop an "h" the effect was staggering. He had a keen sense of fun, too, and could draw laughs from the most melancholy audiences by the mere raising of an eyebrow or the puffing out of his chest. He was sometimes called upon to make bricks without straw when the author had given him a rather skeleton part, and extremely good bricks he made. He was, in fact, a fine actor, and there is no doubt that he would have been a great success in larger and more important parts had he not started as a butler, been born to look like a butler, and been doomed to remain a butler so long as he haunted the stage.

He was always intensely surprised and grateful for any small sum that might be forced upon him.

In my play he appeared in every act and with the surest touch achieved every one of his laughs. I had provided him with a longer part than usually fell to his lot, and the critics gave him several lines of praise. I don't know whether these, or a growing sense of importance, brought on a swollen head, but I do remember that he disappeared for a time, having very unwisely refused any longer to play butlers because he considered that he was a good enough actor to be promoted from the pantry to the drawing-room. Every dog has his day, though, and, even if he had been content to remain in servile *rôles*, the inexorable swing of the pendulum would have put him out of favour. It is the rule of the game.

A year or two later I wanted this man for another play. I applied to the various theatrical agencies in the usual way and was told that he was in work. It was, of course, easy enough to find another actor, and my disappointment faded out when he proved to be just the thing. One night, having passed through the convalescence that follows the illness of a first night, I went to dinner with a friend of mine who owned a particularly nice flat a stone's throw from Hyde Park. He was a bachelor, a member of Parliament, a man who took himself very seriously, and was as clearly cut out for a Cabinet post as the actor in question to announce the fact that "dinner is served, my lord," or that "her Grace requests me to tell your Grace that her Grace is dressing for dinner." I could hardly believe my eyes when, in the perfect

person who relieved me of my hat and coat. I immediately recognized the expert impersonator of stage butlers whom I had not been able to find. He gave the whole flat the same tone and *cachet* that he had given so often to so many society plays. With his inimitable art of deferential familiarity and slightly patronizing interest he caught my eye without a single tremor. He might never have seen me before. He was nevertheless glad to see me because I was a friend of his master. He must have noticed my surprise at finding him in that place and position, but, being an actor of long experience, he retained his kindly and canonical expression and turned to another guest. The thought immediately flicked through my mind as to which of the butlers' names he had selected from his collection of old programmes. Was he Judson, Simpson, Sunbury, or Stagg, to mention only a few? Or had he invented one that was more euphonious under which to masquerade in this part in actual life? My host quickly solved the point by addressing him as Jarvis. It appeared that he was "doubling" in his present play—playing the parts, that is to say, not only of butler but of footman and valet, and from time to time probably of messenger. He had never condescended to do so on the regular stage.

I was immediately intrigued and full of admiration. With the help of a maid he conducted us through the dinner with the most impeccable rhythm and grace, moving from chair to chair and from course to course as silently as an Indian. He was generous with the wines, too, and placed a box of cigarettes upon the table at the exact psychological moment. I watched him out of the corner of my eye with an astonishment which grew from curiosity into respect, and the last of these sentiments was greatly cemented when presently I found an opportunity to speak to him alone.

IN order to do this I invented a reason for using the telephone. This was in the hall. And it was while I was endeavouring to obtain a number which wasn't in the book that he came out of the sitting-room and seemed to invite a friendly word by offering me a smile. I accepted his invitation, held out my hand, and said: "How are you, my dear fellow? They told me you were engaged." Whereupon he nodded, winked, and showed a flash of teeth. "Yes," he said. "Very much engaged, and, so far as I can see, this play is likely to continue, bar the inevitable accident of death, into a record-breaking run." I said, "But tell me, have you retired from the stage?" "Oh, no," said he. "But, you see, the stage retired from me. I had to do something when I couldn't get work, and having done nothing but buttle during my theatrical career I conceived the idea of carrying my stage experience into private life. Of course, my salary is greatly reduced, but I have a very comfortable room, the run of my teeth, and a most distinguished address. In addition to which my clothes are 'found' and I have a night off every week.

"I was on the verge of starvation when I answered your friend's advertisement for a butler, and I have been very happy here. A better way of living, I think, than that of hanging about agents' offices and borrowing money from reluctant friends, undergoing the humiliations of being dunned by a landlady and tradesmen, and all the rest of it." I agreed, and with a certain amount of wonder asked what references he gave. He laughed at that and said, "The best. I had only to submit a list of the names of the titled people whom I had served in a list of plays. And a pretty long list it is. The rest was easy, and I made it my business to play Jarvis even better than those butlers as to whom I earned the flattering comments of every London critic. They will never have an opportunity of seeing me in this part. They are not by way of visiting this house. It's rather out of their beat." Seeing that I needed a match with which to light my cigarette, this wise, honest, and practical man immediately reassumed his butlership in the most efficient way.

As I was leaving that night he came out of his part for a moment when he was handing me my hat. Under his breath he said to me: "I know that I can rely upon you to keep this dark, old man." I nodded and said: "Of course."

A year or so later I saw him on the stage again, in a play by a friend of mine. He was a butler once more and his name was Banbury. It suited him as well, I thought, as all the others had done. It seemed to me that he had put on flesh and had gained a double chin. I was very curious to know whether he had grown tired of his job in Mount Street and had been drawn back to the theatre by its irresistible call. So at the end of the play I went behind the scenes and tapped on his dressing-room door. He was extremely glad to see me, and immediately answered my unspoken question in the following words: "Your friend, my master, has gone abroad for six months, and while I have all my evenings to myself I saw no reason why I shouldn't pick up a few pounds in a ducal house on the stage. If this play is still running when he comes back I must resign, of course. I carry on my duties in the daytime and I'm going to marry the cook."

Two years later I dined again in Mount Street. After dinner I worked it so that I should be alone with Jarvis for a moment. It was then that he handed me a snapshot of a fat little baby boy.

"Son and heir," said he, with a beaming smile. "And you can make a bet about one thing. He'll never go on the stage." This was the incident which, with several variations, gave me the idea for "The New Poor." In that play, you may remember, I made three out-of-work actors impersonate a butler and two footmen in the house of a business man. More unbelievable things happen in life than ever come out of the imagination of the most fertile dramatist.

I KNEW of another actor who never, by any chance, indulged in the habit of resting. He was a man who had come to London after having played for several years on tour. He was a little fellow with a face like india-rubber. It was as easy for him to play the parts of very old men as those of beardless boys. With equal ease and several sticks of grease-paint he could be as convincing as a distinguished lawyer, doctor, squire, or politician, as a querulous old gardener, a dried-up coachman, or the sort of village shopkeeper who, when asked in the second year of the war why his son had not enlisted, replied: "Me and my good wife have decided to remain neutral."

It goes without saying that this man, so versatile and so enthusiastic, was in great request. For several years, in fact, he could not get an opportunity of resting even if he were anxious to do so. Having seen the humiliations and privations which followed his brothers and sisters of the craft into unemployment, he made up his mind to insure himself against similar horrors by building up a business as a side-line. He knew very well that in the natural order of things his luck would change, and he was determined never to go round with the hat or live on the charity of friends. As soon as he got to London, therefore, he established himself as a Turf commission agent. It was very amusing to see this little man in the rather flashy clothes in which he made up for the part that he played off the stage. His only room, in Shaftesbury Avenue, was what he called

I could hardly believe my eyes when, in the perfect person who relieved me of my hat and coat, I immediately recognized the expert impersonator of stage butlers.

his office. Large and comfortable, with the bed hidden behind a screen on which were pasted the photographs of innumerable jockeys, and with coloured prints of race-horses all over his walls, he began his day's work early with the aid of the telephone. When commissions were slack he would go out and look for business. He would pop into the various actors' clubs, and haunt the spots, from eleven o'clock until two, where resting actors foregathered.

Merry and bright, with a vast fund of stories, he was very greatly liked. In addition to which he was honest and was never known to default. As his capital was a small one and his clients far from rich, it goes without saying that his bets were made in silver—though when an outsider romped in unexpectedly they were necessarily paid in gold. Once or twice, especially during those times when he was drawing no salary, he was faced with a stern financial crisis, and was obliged to ask to be allowed to hold over his payments. It was after one of these bad spells that he enlarged his business and was to be seen dodging in and out of alleyways and public-houses, taking the bets, in pennies and sixpences, of postmen, potmen, newspaper boys, bootblacks, bus-drivers, taxi-drivers, and even, it must be confessed, of policemen, who, though dressed in a little brief authority, are very human indeed. Up one day and down the next, this indefatigable little man, as good an actor off the stage as he was upon it, managed to keep his head above water and pay his way.

NOWADAYS it is the habit of the young members of the profession who have been in musical comedy to fill in their time during the summer at the various seaside resorts. They band together, call themselves " The Scarlet Runners," or some other amusing name, and work as pierrots in tents and huts. With a comedy merchant as ripe as a Stilton cheese, a languishing leading juvenile who sings sentimental songs, a girl as much like Beatrice Lillie as any that can be found, and several others who are capable of giving imitations of well-known actors and actresses, they work very hard indeed, performing in the morning, the afternoon, and evening after dinner. The more ambitious of these troupes give their variety entertainments in an enclosure which can be open to the sky or closed to it, according to the weather. In this there is a wooden shed with a workable stage and footlights, and the price of the seats runs anywhere from a shilling to half a crown. If the resort is popular and the entertainments are varied, sufficient money is taken to enable the troupe to live fairly respectably from June to the end of August, when the holiday season ends. Imitating the well-known methods of the Co-Optimists, who have brought the pierrot form of entertainment to a very high point indeed, they frequently give a charming and delightful show and become great favourites not only with the children and the flappers, but with the grown-ups, by whom they are invariably addressed by their Christian names.

The more modest of these troupes, unable to afford to pay a rental for a permanent pitch, give their nightly performances in the open air on the beach, and then hand round the hat. They rely upon the generosity of their audiences to reward their efforts to please. Entirely at the mercy of the weather, they are unable to form any sort of estimate as their weekly earnings. I knew of one such troupe which averaged no more during the whole of a summer season than eight pounds a week, and this, divided among six people, meant the simple life for them all. The leading juvenile of these itinerants afterwards had the good luck to be engaged to play at Daly's Theatre, and is now drawing a salary larger than that of the Lord Chief Justice himself. There was a young chorus girl in another who was seen by a London manager, both in the sun and the moonlight, and given a small part by him in one of his theatres in town. At the end of the year she was promoted to the leading part, and eventually married a peer.

There is the case, too, of a young man who, like one of Wells's heroes, began his career by selling collars and socks, ties and shirts, in a haberdasher's shop. Not only was he a born actor but he was possessed of a Henry Ainley profile and extremely romantic hair. With these inestimable advantages, what more natural than that he should gravitate to the stage? An earnest and painstaking person, he studied elocution after business hours and, with the patience of an opera singer, memorized the whole of " Hamlet," " Romeo and Juliet," " Othello," " Twelfth Night," " As You Like It," and the rest. Earning less on the stage than he made by standing behind the counter, he very quickly became a great favourite in the " Smalls " in the Shakespearean touring company into which he had the good fortune to break on the strength of his handsome face. He had fire and enthusiasm in addition to undoubted good looks, but, unfortunately, he was handicapped by an extremely broad North-country accent, which, notwithstanding the most violent efforts to eradicate, remained with him and became stronger in his moments of ecstasy. This made it impossible for him ever to hope to become a London actor, and so he was doomed to

make the rounds year by year of the minor towns. He had a soul above buttons, however, and although he did no more than rake in a harvest of barren regrets, he preferred to play Hamlet in one-eyed places than to walk on in London comedies carrying a silver tray.

In the summer, when his company had disbanded, he conceived the idea of keeping his head above water by giving Shakespearean readings in various provincial towns. With unbobbed hair and dressed in a Shakespearean costume, he would strut out of his public-house in the evening and take up a stand beneath a lamp-post in the market-place. The mere sight of him in such odd garments would immediately attract the curiosity of all the passers-by. To these he would then hand out a leaflet upon which it was stated that he was the actor upon whom had descended the mantle of Macready. And as soon as a big enough crowd had collected, he would raise his mellifluous voice, marred by a Newcastle burr, and proceed to deliver himself of the principal scenes from whichever of the Bard's immortal plays he felt in the spirit to choose. I came across him one night in Dundee, standing in the fine old square in the midst of an open-mouthed group. A befeathered hat was placed within a few yards of his feet, and into this his canny listeners pitched small coins as a reward for one of the most admirable interpretations of "Hamlet" that I had ever heard. At the end of his performance, interrupted frequently by the passing of carts and cars, he had collected the vast sum in pennies of something under three shillings. He told me so with a wry smile, and when I invited him to join me for supper at my hotel, he sketched out with a certain ironic humour the story of his summer struggles.

It appeared that he walked from village to village and town to town, carrying his costume in a knapsack, which also contained a tooth-brush, a cake of soap, and a comb, with which to arrange his long, poetic locks. When times were very bad he passed the night under haystacks, or made a warm place for himself in the corner of a shed. When things went better he occupied a bed in a village inn, and bought tobacco with which to load a very friendly pipe. As he marched along the country roads he spouted Shakespeare to the quite indifferent birds, evoking the loud guffaws of shepherds and farm hands and the girls who worked in cabbage patches, who considered that he was daft. It must, indeed, have

Dodging in and out of alleyways taking bets in pennies and sixpences.

Into his befeathered hat his canny listeners pitched small coins as a reward for one of the most admirable interpretations of "Hamlet" that I had ever heard.

been somewhat surprising for these boys and girls to have heard "To be or not to be" on the other side of a hedge, or Hamlet's address to the players uttered in a loud and resonant voice in the middle of a sunny and prosaic morning.

He told me that sometimes he was followed by a little gang of roughs, and then was called upon to show that he was a hefty man as well as a spouter of verse, by hitting out with his left. On the whole, however, he was treated rather well, especially in those places whose inhabitants had become familiar with his readings and looked forward to his yearly appearances with pleasure and delight. His face was not sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, because he caught the sun, and the splendid exercise acquired by walking long distances made him more like an athlete than an actor any day. When the war broke out he returned, I was told, to his native city and joined up immediately, and although he had, of course, to shed his valuable locks, he was in great request after strenuous days of training as Shakespeare's interpreter. He would raise his voice on route marches and give forth the gorgeous lines of the Bard which he knew by heart and soul, and in this way afforded great delight both to officers and men. He made a splendid soldier, and, like George Osborne at Waterloo, and so many others who took up arms and became crusaders in 1914, fell face downwards with a bullet through his heart.

OF the remaining instances that come to my mind one is of a certain young actor who, on the strength of his appearance, charming manners, and infectious chuckle, was given a line or two to speak on the London stage some years before the war.

He not only wore very excellent clothes, but, being tall and well-set-up, he wore them excellently well. Having no other money than that acquired from his intermittent engagements, there came a time when he owed his tailor a rather lengthy bill. The patience of the London tailor is proverbially good, but when, one day, this ran out and he was threatened with a writ, he conceived the brainy notion of hiring himself to the firm in question as a walking advertisement. After some consideration and a short discussion of terms, he became a male manikin and went about London for several years, whether engaged or not, looking as though he had stepped out of a bandbox, faultlessly attired. It was his practice to haunt the bars of the fashionable hotels, show himself up and down Piccadilly at the right time of day, stand on the steps of the Junior clubs, attend the cricket matches at Lord's, and hang about railway stations at the hour when the suburban trains were leaving at night with their cargoes of business men. In all these places he showed himself off, the *dernier cri* among dandies. Whenever he caught the gaze of a man who appeared to be interested, he went forward with a pleasant smile and handed a card on which the name of his tailor was printed and the prices duly set forth.

His manners were nice, his air was modest, and when the presentation of his pasteboard was received in a pleasant spirit, he then recited a pæan of praise of the workmanship of his employers and described exactly where their place of business was to be found. He was perfectly frank to the people with whom he managed to converse, and always told them who he was and why he was pursuing that method of adding to his precarious salary. Eventually, with constant practice, he brought this strange method of earning a living to so high a pitch of perfection that he was placed on a commission basis and did very well indeed. Every evening at six o'clock he made his way back to the point from which he started in the morning and shed himself of his exhibition garments and got back into his own. He wore every sort of garment necessary to a male wardrobe, with their appropriate hats, and became a well-known figure in the London streets. Not only did he acquire the reputation of being the best-dressed man in town, but attained many a minor engagement from the fact that he dressed so well. He was not a very good actor and had only gone on the stage because he had never been brought up to earn his living in one of the professions. Before the war he came to the conclusion that he was doomed to play small parts, and joined the tailors, whose "suitings" he had displayed so tactfully, as a member of the firm. He is now a fat and substantial man with a wife and family, and is to be seen daily, with a tape measure hanging round his neck, waiting on customers in the shop from which he was long ago in the habit of getting his clothes on tick. If the stage has lost in him a very decorative figure, life has gained an honest and ingenious man who invents from time to time those slight differences in male garments which cause so great a sensation in the mind of the well-dressed man.

THE remaining case is one of which I was told the other day. It is of a young actor who disappeared from his usual haunts, and was presently discovered by two brothers of the hare's-foot in a lunatic asylum. Much shocked at this man's bad condition, they called one afternoon to see him and found him very mad. When, however, the attendant was called away and they were left alone, the actor in question turned to his very good friends with a perfectly healthy smile. "Don't worry about me," he said. "I'm quite all right. Just filling in the summer, nothing worse."

"Jeeves and the Impending Doom,"

— BY —

P. G. WODEHOUSE,

will be one of the many good things in the Christmas "Strand."

THE SALARY OF SIN

By

J. D. MILLARD

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

MR. HAMILTON HILLMAN coughed importantly as he passed from his private sitting-room in the palatial suite which he had engaged in the millionaires' wing of that famous London hotel, the Magniflora, for the duration of the notorious Duke of Kew Case, to the room in which he had installed his secretary.

" To-day, Miss Melrose," he said, " we will receive the Press."

Miss Melrose nodded a discreet acquiescence, and turned her attention once more to the morning's voluminous correspondence of the famous King's Evidence. A romantic little soul, Miss Melrose, and nurtured on Sheik fiction, she adored her virile employer. His use of the regal " we " impressed and thrilled her ; also she felt a little that she was included in the magnificent monosyllable. Of all the letters Mr. Hamilton Hillman had received from romantic and designing females on the first day of the preliminary proceedings, hers alone he had deigned to answer personally. She had written suggesting that he would require a secretary to deal with his correspondence during the trial. The pile of other letters was itself a recommendation, and after an interview, in which he had been more impressed by her pleasant features than by the excellent references she furnished, he had engaged her forthwith. He had not realized the set purpose behind those quiet grey eyes, and the assault on his liberty—none the less deadly for being concealed until the time should be ripe—which had been planned there.

Whenever his eyes fell on the neat and trim little secretary bending over her typewriter, Mr. Hamilton Hillman mentally patted himself on the back. He with a secretary, he would reflect, and staying in London's most expensive hotel, when not so long ago he had been a hard-up journalist with little more than the typescript of a lurid serial, entitled " The Adventures of James Graves, Forger, Blackmailer, and Cat-Burglar," which had been turned down by every editor in London, between him and starvation !

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For a time he was in extremely low water. It was no good his attempting to sponge on his relatives—which he would willingly have done—because his brother-in-law, the afterwards notorious Attwater (his only relation it was worth anybody's while to bleed), had positively refused him help and prevented him from seeing his sister.

He had had some good billets in his time, but had never been able to keep them. He could write, there was no doubt about that, but he lacked the topical sense. His " copy " was good, vivid stuff, but it always arrived a day late. So he had fallen out of the race.

Lucky for him had been the day when, walking along Clarges Street in a fog, he had been nearly knocked over by a man who stumbled helplessly drunk down the steps of a house. Turning with an angry exclamation, Mr. Hamilton Hillman recognized in his aggressor his brother-in-law, Attwater. He quickly sized up the man's condition, and, taking his arm, bundled him into a taxi—not from any motives of friendliness, but for what he hoped he might acquire by running his nimble fingers over the helpless man's pockets.

In the cab his brother-in-law became talkative.

" Well, if it isn't old Hamilton," he mumbled. " You're a good feller, Hamilton. Help a man when he's not feeling well. Good feller. Duke of Kew, he's good feller, too. All good fellers—you, me, and Duke of Kew." He leaned over and whispered in Mr. Hamilton Hillman's ear. " Duke of Kew, good feller. Pays up like a gentleman. Is a gentleman. See here." He fumbled in his breast-pocket. Mr. Hamilton Hillman

offered his help, and, with an approving nod from its owner, withdrew Attwater's pocket-book and opened it. Within lay a cheque for five thousand pounds, made out to Attwater and signed by the Duke of Kew. At this point Mr. Hamilton Hillman began to take notice. Why should the Duke of Kew be paying his brother-in-law such a large sum?

"Just gave it to me," murmured Attwater. "Put it back. Don't tell Milbourne, though. Good feller, Milbourne, but too mean. Don't tell Milbourne."

Milbourne, Mr. Hamilton Hillman recognized, was the name of a well-known figure on the Turf. But he was still puzzling his brains to think why the Duke should part with so much money to his brother-in-law. For no good purpose, he surmised. Silence, he decided, was his best policy, and he might hear something useful to himself. The other man seemed, however, to have realized that he had said too much and relapsed into silence.

Mr. Hamilton Hillman had some first thoughts of demanding a part of the plunder as the price of his not revealing the matter of the cheque to Milbourne, who, he quickly guessed, must have some claim to a part of it, but a sudden thought struck him and he decided upon playing a bolder game. Borrowing money from Attwater (who thrust a five-pound note into his hand with the words, "Money? Plenty money. Take it, old feller. Duke of Kew got plenty more") to pay the taxi, he pulled up at the Criterion bar, took his brother-in-law inside, and commenced plying him with more with the intention that his brother-in-law should continue his revelations. He was unsuccessful, however, in attaining his object. But when eventually Attwater reached his home he fell into a deep sleep, from which he awoke in the morning with no more remembrance of the previous evening than that he had met his brother-in-law. He feared how much he might have revealed. And when Mr. Hamilton Hillman presented himself bright and early his blackest fears were justified.

By a supreme piece of bluff, Mr. Hamilton Hillman convinced Attwater that he had found out the whole secret of how Attwater was extracting money from the Duke of Kew, and forced his brother-in-law to admit him to a share of the pickings under a threat of exposure. It was not until some weeks later that he learned, by putting together the various pieces of information he picked up from his brother-in-law and Milbourne, that Attwater, Milbourne, and several others were in possession of certain facts which the Duke of Kew was induced to pay them large sums for keeping quiet.

Attwater, Milbourne, and the others, you see, were not nice people to know. But neither was Mr. Hamilton Hillman. When the blow fell and the police got to know of their little game through the Duke putting a pistol to his head and blowing his brains out, Mr. Hamilton Hillman turned King's Evidence; for, whatever the romantic may believe, there is no more honour among thieves than among the respectable members of the community. Ten thousand pounds had been Mr. Hamilton Hillman's share of the plunder, which his grateful country had allowed him to keep, in addition to paying him the sum of three thousand pounds for his patriotic noble-mindedness in giving enough evidence to secure the conviction of his confederates, Messrs. Attwater, Milbourne, and the others, when it was too late and the damage done.

The case was tried before one of England's most deadly witty judges. On the second day of the trial his Lordship gave the evening newspapers a good headline by inquiring in his blandest tones of one of the witnesses: "What, precisely, is a cat-burglar?" He exploited this vein of brilliant humour for the eight days the case ran. Daily the Old Bailey was thronged with crowds anxious to gloat over the details of the downfall of a noble house, and all that time the papers were provided with columns of cheap "copy," which sold as fast as the presses could grind them out.

Throughout the trial, which was now concluded, Mr. Hamilton Hillman had steadfastly refused to be interviewed, or to write articles for the Press giving his views on Capital Punishment, How to be Happy Though Poor, Are Criminals Sane? Improvements I Should Make in the Course of the Grand National, or any other burning topic of the day. Consequently he was in great demand. And when it was known that he had man-handled and forcibly ejected two reporters on the third day of the trial, editors became more than ever determined to secure an interview with him, or at least something from his pen.

MR. HILLMAN'S first visitor on this particular morning was a newspaper man, the representative of *The Sunday Journal*. Mr. Hamilton Hillman received him at the impressive mahogany desk in the secretary's room. A cigar decorated his baggy face, out of which his little pig's eyes, screwed up in rolls of fat, glanced inquiringly at the reporter.

"Paper?" asked Mr. Hillman.

"*The Sunday Journal*," answered the man.

"Good enough," vouchsafed Mr. Hillman. "Just wait a minute, will you?" He turned to his secretary. "Miss Melrose, get the editor of *The Sunday Journal* on the 'phone, please."

"Is that the editor of *The Sunday Journal?*" he inquired of the instrument a moment later. "Yes, this is Hamilton Hillman. Your man is here, but I am afraid I can't afford to *give* anything away. I'll write you an interview myself, though. Can I write? I was in the 'Street' myself once. Yes, on *The Excelsior*. A thousand words? Yes, it shall be exclusive. And the price? Two hundred pounds is my price. What's that—Kipling doesn't get as much? Sorry, I can't help that. He wasn't King's Evidence in the Duke of Kew Case, was he? Call it a deal? All right, send down a letter of agreement with the cheque to-day, and you shall have the copy to-morrow morning. Good-bye."

He hung up the receiver and held out his hand to the reporter, who had been listening in growing astonishment.

"Good morning," said Mr. Hillman. "Glad you called."

Then he turned to his secretary:—

"Take down, Miss Melrose, please. 'Interviewed to-day in his suite in the Magniflora Hotel, Mr. Hamilton Hillman, the famous King's Evidence in the Duke of Kew Case, said——'"

IN his correspondence that day was a letter from the editor of *The Weekly Newspaper*, who wondered whether Mr. Hamilton Hillman would care to write the story of his doubtless remarkably interesting life, to be published serially in *The Weekly Newspaper*. Sixty thousand words at three thousand pounds. Or, if Mr. Hillman did not care to write himself, but would give the necessary information, *The Weekly Newspaper* was prepared to pay Mr. Hillman five hundred pounds for his signature.

Mr. Hillman read the letter with a smile on his face. He tossed it into his secretary's basket to be answered.

"Tell 'em," he said, "I'll write it myself, but the price will be five thousand pounds for the serial rights only."

In due course the editor of *The Weekly Newspaper* succumbed to the temptation of publishing exclusively the story of his life by Mr. Hamilton Hillman, King's Evidence in the trial of Rex *v.* Attwater, Milbourne, and others, better known, perhaps, as the Duke of Kew Case, on Mr. Hillman's own terms. So one bright morning Mr. Hillman set to work to transform "The Adventures of James Graves, Forger, Blackmailer, and Cat-Burglar," the rejected manuscript of which he had kept by him in all his fluctuating fortunes, into "My Life of Crime," by Hamilton Hillman, King's Evidence in the Duke of Kew Case. He painted a masterful, but untrue, picture of his early life. He borrowed a leaf from Dickens and told how he was taught at a tender age, not to pick pockets, but to rob the pennies from blind men's cups. All of this a sensation-loving public swallowed greedily, and asked for more. So, at Miss Melrose's suggestion he interwove a mythical love-story, in which he married a rich widow for her money and afterwards left her penniless. For this tit-bit, which ran into another ten thousand words, the editor was induced to part with another cheque for six hundred pounds. Mr. Hamilton Hillman was delighted. He patted his secretary's arm, said she was a good girl, and should have a new frock. So pleased was he with the result when she appeared before him that he carried her off with him to see "High Kicks," the popular revue.

Not long after the serial publication of his fictitious life-story had concluded and it had appeared in book-form (for an enterprising publisher had soon realized the possibilities of this remarkable story, which read like a novel and yet had the added attraction of being true, or, at least, of passing for truth. Enterprising the publisher was, but not so enterprising as Mr. Hamilton Hillman, who had insisted on a first payment on account of royalties of five hundred pounds and a royalty of seven and a half per cent. of the published price of the book on every copy sold!), Mr. Hillman was returning with a friend from a theatre, strolling bare-headed through the streets as the night was warm. As they passed along Shaftesbury Avenue the glowing electrics outside the Drama Theatre, announcing the appearance of the great Replingham Rhodes in "Zoroaster the Prince," swung into view. His friend caught Mr. Hillman's arm.

"Ever met Replingham Rhodes?" he asked.

Mr. Hillman shrugged his shoulders and moved his head in a disinterested negative.

"No; why?"

"Care to meet him? You'd like him. He's an interesting man. We'll pop in now and I'll introduce you if you like. We shall just catch him before he goes home."

"Lead on, then," answered Mr. Hillman, and together they passed in at the stage-door, round in Great Windmill Street.

"Mr. Rhodes, sir?" answered the stage-doorkeeper to their inquiries. "He's on the stage, sir, interviewing the electrician."

"Come along, we'll see him there. He won't mind me interrupting him to introduce such a famous man as you," said the friend.

They found Replingham Rhodes on the darkened stage with the electrician, who, under Replingham Rhodes's directions, had been trying out some new effects. Replingham Rhodes was a great actor. He attended

to every detail of his productions himself. He believed that the setting of a scene was the principal factor in the success of a play, provided, of course, that the actor in it was his own inimitable self. He applied this principle to his everyday intercourse with his fellows. That was why he had induced Mr. Hillman's friend, who was his own personal friend, to bring Mr. Hillman in to see him in this seemingly casual way. Mr. Replingham Rhodes was thus enabled to meet Mr. Hillman on his own ground.

There was indeed something in his contention. Recognizing his friend approaching with Mr. Hillman, he waved away the electrician with the airy motion of a stage king dismissing a vassal. Alone in the midst of the great stage (one of the three claiming to be the largest in the world), he was an impressive figure. He was still in the ornate uniform of Zoroaster the Prince. Above and around him, like the vaulted roof of some Gothic fane, towered those mysterious regions whence descended forests, meadows, trees, hills, castles, and interiors at the behest of the stage-manager. Behind him opened the vast maw of the empty, unlighted house, the lines of its tiers of seats one above the other only dimly outlined, like the rows of teeth in a shark's mouth.

Mr. Hillman, as he advanced across the weary desert of the enormous stage to meet the actor, could not help being impressed by the noble, tragic figure of Replingham Rhodes, the head slightly drooping as though under some great and secret access of woe, and lighted only by the gleams from the high-powered naked bulbs which filtered through from the wings.

Mr. Replingham Rhodes listened attentively to the introduction.

"Mr. Hamilton Hillman?" he said, as he grasped both of Mr. Hillman's hands in a languid handshake. "Mr. Hamilton Hillman. Haven't I heard the name before?"

"Good morning," said Mr. Hillman to the reporter. "Glad you called." Then he turned to his secretary: "Take down, Miss Melrose, please."

"Probably," replied Mr. Hamilton Hillman, shortly, feeling uncomfortably out of his element, as it had been intended that he should. "Glad to meet you, sir."

A whisper to the great man from the friend. Then the great man spoke again.

"Ah, the author. I remember now. Mr. Hamilton Hillman, the author." He became a shade more animated. "Didn't I read a novel of yours recently? 'My Criminal Career,' was it not? A fine book, Mr. Hillman, a fine book."

"'My Life of Crime,' you mean, Mr. Rhodes," replied Mr. Hillman, who was rapidly recovering his natural *sang-froid*. "Hardly a novel, I should call it, since every word is the true account of my own life."

"Really, Mr. Hamilton Hillman, you surprise me," said Mr. Rhodes with a sigh, and he looked at Mr. Hillman as though reproaching him for keeping such a thing secret from the great Rhodes. "Absolutely true, you say? I confess you surprise me, sir."

AT this point the friend, acting under instructions, had tactfully moved away, leaving the famous actor and the notorious King's Evidence to their discussion. The actor continued:—

"A most remarkable book, Mr. Hillman, a most remarkable book. And what you have just told me"—he said this as though he had not seen it blazoned in a thousand advertisements and clearly stated in the book itself—"makes it doubly remarkable. Has it ever occurred to you"—here the actor glanced suspiciously round at the empty stage and leaned over to whisper in Mr. Hillman's ear—"has it ever occurred to you what a splendid play might be made of the part of your book which deals with the blackmailing of the Duke of Kew?"

"I wrote it with that in view," replied Mr. Hillman, quite at his ease now that he saw in which direction the wind blew. Replingham Rhodes drew himself up to his full height and cocked a suspicious eye at Mr. Hillman. But Mr. Hillman was evidently not joking. So he went on to elaborate his idea.

"In the experienced hands of a man of the theatre it could be converted into a very creditable play. And played by a suitable actor of sufficient greatness, I should have little doubt in predicting a huge success for it. But only with a suitable actor for the part."

"A suitable actor?" queried Mr. Hillman. "Such as, for example?"

"Myself," replied the great Rhodes, and bowed modestly to the empty house.

"Would you care to undertake to produce the play yourself, Mr. Replingham Rhodes?" inquired Mr. Hillman.

"I might, I might. I shall have to be looking out for a new piece to replace this one very shortly. I repeat, I might."

"Suppose I had the book dramatized, what terms would you offer me?" asked Mr. Hillman.

"Terms, my dear sir?" The actor spread his hands out before him in a gesture of helplessness. "Terms, Mr. Hillman? I—ah—my agent——"

"Then there's nothing doing, Mr. Rhodes," affirmed Mr. Hamilton Hillman. Shocked, the actor, hands clasped behind his back, head bowed between his shoulders, passed back and forth on the stage. He was not used to doing business in this uncouth, direct manner.

"I am sorry, Mr. Rhodes," Mr. Hamilton Hillman intercepted these moody pacings. "I am sorry, but it is my invariable rule to deal with principals only. I am much obliged to you for your suggestion, however. No doubt some other manager——"

He did not have a chance to say more. He was interrupted in his turn by the famous actor, whose melodic voice assumed a reproachful cadence.

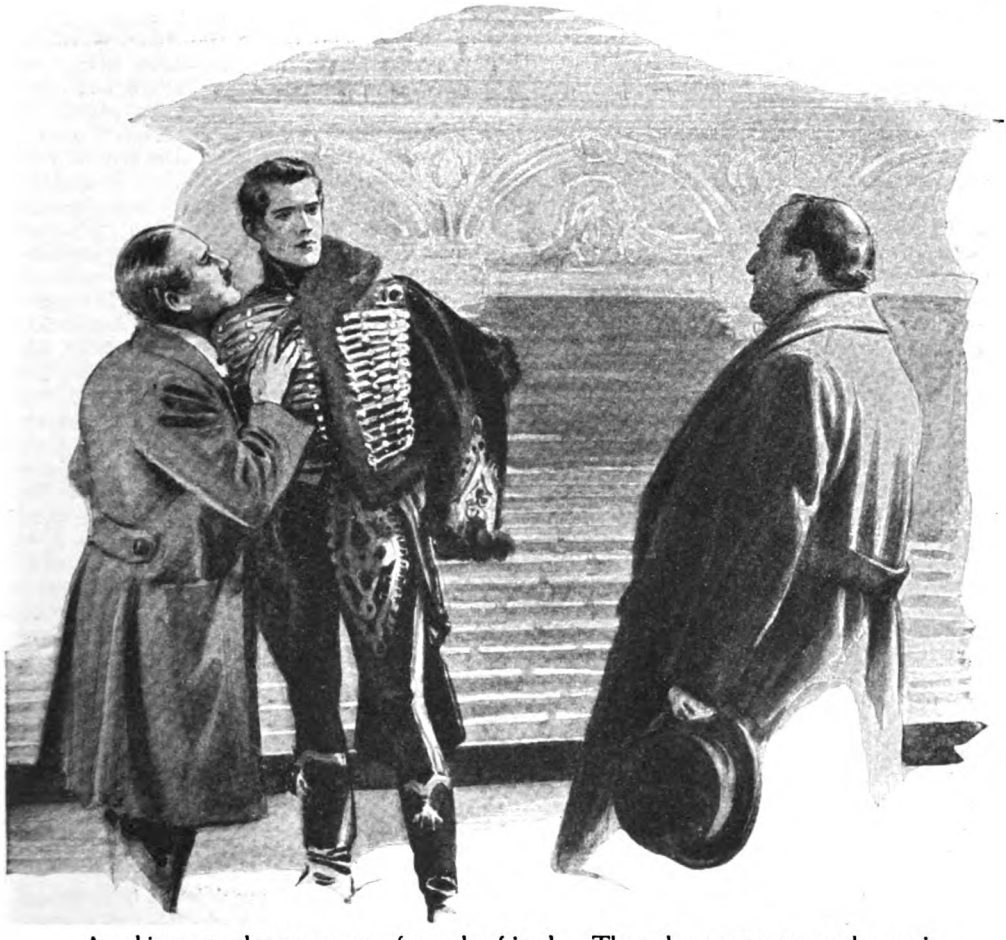
"Gently, Mr. Hillman, gently. I—ah—am not used to discussing—er—monetary matters myself. My agent usually deals with such details. But I may—ah—in this instance, allow myself to be guided by your wishes."

"Exactly," rapped out Mr. Hillman, now thoroughly in his element.

The actor started as if he had been shot. Then he relapsed into apathy, resuming his pacings up and down the stage. He passed the long, carefully-tended fingers of his left hand nervously over his clammy forehead. Indeed, this interview was not turning out at all well, nor at all as he had anticipated. He could see that Mr. Hillman would drive a hard bargain.

Hard bargain it was; for, when the negotiations were complete, Replingham Rhodes found that he had undertaken to dramatize Mr. Hillman's "My Life of Crime" without any charge to Mr. Hillman, and to pay Mr. Hillman a royalty of five per cent. of all takings (not profits, be it noted) at every performance in London and on tour, and in any case, succeed or fail, Mr. Hillman was to be paid five hundred pounds. Replingham Rhodes shuddered when he thought of what he had committed himself to. He dared not think what would happen should the play prove a frost.

He need not have worried, however, for the play immediately created a furore and played to full houses every night in London for three years, while no fewer than five



A whisper to the great man from the friend. Then the great man spoke again. "Ah, the author. I remember now. Mr. Hamilton Hillman, the author."

touring companies were at one time producing it throughout the provinces, to say nothing of one in Australia and another in South Africa. Indeed, the visitor to Australia in twenty years' time will probably find "The Duke of 'Q' Case," as the play was called (for it was thought necessary to change all the names and put up a pretence of its being fiction), still being produced somewhere in the backwoods of Australia. On the London production alone Mr. Hamilton Hillman netted one hundred and seventy-five pounds a week, or rather more than nine thousand pounds per annum. He made even more on the American version.

In New York the play was first produced on Broadway by the Pegtop Dramatic Guild, one of the highbrow play-producing societies. They were under the impression that "The Duke of 'Q' Case" was minor Elizabethan in modern dress, and therefore worthy of their august attention. When the truth was found out the whole American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Baffin Land to the Rio Grande, quivered with laughter. The consequence was that Dramatic Guilds and all Uplift Clubs throughout the continent suffered a serious eclipse. The Pegtop dropped "The Duke of 'Q' Case" as if it had bitten them, instead of having brought in thousands of good dollars nightly, as it had. They had had some qualms from the first when they found that the play was making money. In their experience, nothing which made money was ever Art.

The publicity given to the hoax played on the Pegtop was so great that when the play was revived by an ordinary commercial management—this time in New York and Chicago simultaneously, both of which

productions sprouted half-a-dozen touring companies—seats were soon unprocurable for the first two years of the productions. And it became the fashion to put down the names of newly-born infants for seats, just as boys are entered for Eton in their first years.

Thus it happened that a considerable proportion of Britain's war debt to America was wiped out in payment of royalties to Mr. Hamilton Hillman, American income-tax and British super-tax notwithstanding. For years afterwards Mr. Hamilton Hillman was famed as the only dramatic author, always excepting, of course, Messrs. Bernard Shaw and Noel Coward, whose name appeared on the play-bills in letters anywhere approaching the size of those of the principal actor.

ONLY one mistake did Mr. Hamilton Hillman make in negotiating the various rights of his criminal career, and even that mistake really resulted in his ultimate gain.

In his comparatively impecunious days—before his book had been dramatized, when he was still staying at the Magniflora Hotel and had not yet removed to the mansion in Carlton House Terrace—Mr. Hillman suddenly found himself in need of money—a lot of it—to pay gambling debts (Mr. Hillman's tailor had had an account outstanding for some months, but that did not worry Mr. Hillman, not being a debt of honour). It is not to be supposed that Mr. Hillman *wanted* to pay his gambling debts, but just at this moment it suited him to. He had with difficulty wormed himself into a set sprinkled with a few Continental princelings living on their wits and the proceeds of selling the family heirlooms, and other notorieties of somewhat doubtful qualifications for eminence, like Mr. Hillman's own, and with whom Mr. Hillman, in his pre-affluence days, felt it worth his while to keep in touch. And it was a set with whom it was eminently desirable to settle one's gambling debts quickly.

Mr. Hillman was sitting smoking his after-lunch cigar in his private sitting-room, turning over in his mind his various easily negotiable assets, and wondering where the money was to come from, when he received an unexpected visitor.

Miss Melrose, whom Mr. Hamilton Hillman was finding day by day he could do less and less without, ushered into his room an upstanding man carrying a large and light-coloured Homburg, which one instinctively felt he would wear at a jaunty angle. He was tall, and, with a monocle jammed into one eye, at first impressive. His face was bronzed, and a tiny tooth-brush moustache decorated his upper lip. There was an air of the retired military man about him. A closer inspection revealed a glassy stare, quite unconnected with the monocle, about his eyes. They had once been blue, but now were a muddy grey. There was soon noticeable, too, a faint aroma of whisky in any room into which he chanced to come He insisted upon greeting Mr. Hillman in a hail-fellow-well-met manner, a manner which immediately put Mr. Hillman on his guard. Mr. Hillman had come to learn that the people who wished to be friendly with him usually had some motive not unconnected with his cheque-book. It turned out, however, that Mr. Hillman's visitor had not come to beg (if we except a copy of Mr. Hillman's book, " which he had once, but mislaid it, dash it, don't you know ? "), but to put a hard-and-fast business proposition before Mr. Hillman.

" I represent Fools' Films," the stranger introduced himself.

" Eh ? " Partial deafness Mr. Hillman had always found a powerful weapon of negotiation.

" Fools' Films, Limited," repeated Major Braemar, which was his name. " I am empowered by Fools' Films to negotiate with you the film rights of your book—er, what's it called ? ' My Life of Crime,' what ? "

" Ah ! Um ! " Mr. Hillman had discovered, too, the uses of unintelligible grunts. Undeterred, his visitor proceeded :—

" We, Fools' Films, Limited, are prepared to undertake the adaptation of your book, film it, and distribute the film throughout the world."

" Good," Mr. Hillman deigned to murmur.

" I now wish to inquire whether you would be prepared to consider an offer."

Like a lightning flash Mr. Hillman's reply jerked out, and his lips snapped together :—

" How much ? "

The Major considered Mr. Hillman a moment before replying. His eyes lost temporarily their blank stare as he sized up Mr. Hillman's price. He did not know that that was a vain endeavour, since Mr. Hillman's invariable rule was to double any offer made to him.

" Coupla thou'," ventured the Major.

" Done for four," answered Mr. Hillman. Here was the thousand he needed for his debts and a little profit besides.

The Major shrugged a negative, picked up his hat, and moved to go.

" Wait a bit." Mr. Hillman placed a restraining hand on his visitor's arm. " Can you let me have a cheque by to-morrow ? If so, I'll take less."

The Major considered a moment, made for the door, hesitated, returned, and opened the discussion again.

Eventually they compromised on three

thousand pounds, and the next day Mr. Hillman had signed the necessary documents and paid the cheque into his bank.

The irony of the situation was that Mr. Hillman received three cablegrams the day after from three separate film corporations of Hollywood (Cal.) offering him twenty thousand dollars, twenty-five thousand dollars, and a blank cheque respectively for the film rights of " My Life of Crime "—advance copies of which, before publication in New York, had been conveyed in specially chartered airplanes across the continent to the panjandrums of the film industry in Hollywood. Thus Mr. Hamilton Hillman's losses on the sale of the film rights of his crimes were beyond computation. He reconciled himself with the pious hope that it would be counted unto him for righteousness that he had supported home industries (albeit inadvertently).

Nothing daunted by his unhappy lapse, Mr. Hamilton Hillman dashed off a cablegram immediately to the American corporation which had offered him the blank cheque for the film rights of his book. It said :—

BOOSTER PICTUREPLAYERS INC HOLLYWOOD CALIFORNIA REGRET HAVE DISPOSED FILM RIGHTS MY LIFE CRIME STOP STILL COMMA SEND BLANK CHEQUE COMMA FOR SALARY MY PLAYING LEAD ANY FILM YOU CARE PRODUCE ABOUT ME STOP HILLMAN COMMA KINGS EVIDENCE STOP.

Booster Pictureplayers did not quite see eye to eye with Mr. Hillman over the blank cheque. They were prepared to negotiate, however, and for the next few days the Atlantic steamed from the heat generated on its bed by cablegrams passing to and fro between Mr. Hillman and Booster Pictureplayers. The upshot of them was that Mr. Hamilton Hillman was to play lead in a high-life crook drama of New York, written and produced by Booster Pictureplayers, for which he was to receive a salary of two hundred pounds a week during the production, which in any case was to take no less than six months.

AND this introduces the final scene of Mr. Hamilton Hillman's strange eventful career.

He was high up on the boat deck of the *Jupiter*, the world's largest liner (if we except two others of rival companies for which the same claims were made). The ocean, realizing the precious freight carried on its bosom in the person of Mr. Hamilton Hillman, had stilled its angry tossing. The passage had been ideal, and now, by the light of the early morning sun, the magnificent vessel was gently nosing her way into the Hudson River, silently, except for the little ripple of water at her bows, as she moved dead slow, and, far up on the bridge, the answering clang of the engine-room bell.

Mr. Hamilton Hillman leaned against the rail and absorbed the scene as the Statue of Liberty loomed past. Beyond, in the river haze, lay New York, like the building blocks of some giant's child scattered haphazard on the strand. As the sky-scrapers drew closer it became apparent that the Woolworth Building was decorated down its length with an illuminated sign. It was still left burning, looking, in the morning light, remarkably like a belated reveller, in order that Mr. Hillman might see the sign which had been blazing all night invisible to him aboard the *Jupiter*, anchored in the Narrows, where she awaited the convenience of the Quarantine officials. When they were near enough to distinguish clearly the sign's meaning, Mr. Hillman turned to his companion—the faithful Miss Melrose—puffed out his shirt-front, and fetched a sigh.

" Fame, my dear," he whispered. " Fame ! "

For a little while he was overcome and could not speak. For the sign on the Woolworth Building was " Welcome to Hamilton Hillman." How could Mr. Hillman, in the simplicity of his great mind, know that the sign was only a piece of publicity on the part of Booster Pictureplayers, Inc. ? When he had sufficiently mastered his feelings to be able to give utterance, he slid his pudgy, beringed hand along the rail and laid it on Miss Melrose's arm.

" Did you ever hear, Miss Melrose——? " he asked. " No—did you ever hear, Margaret, my dear, what an eminent film producer once said was the necessary conclusion to a film to send away an audience happy ? "

" No, Mr. Hillman," she answered, still very respectfully, though tremblingly.

" Don't call me Mr. Hillman," he commanded, regaining a little of that authoritative manner which had carried him so far and so successfully. " What he said was, ' In the end the boy must get the girl and he must get the gold.' Miss Melrose—er—Margaret, I have got the gold; will you be the girl ? "

" Oh, Hammie ! " was all faithful Miss Melrose could stutter, as she was clove as close to his manly shirt-front as Mr. Hillman's natural tendency to corpulence would permit.

The Desert Island

By G. R. MALLOCH

Illustrated by
TOM PEDDIE

"IF I told you the truth," said Hugo, "you wouldn't believe it."

Hugo is an actor of some distinction and a thoroughly good fellow. We enjoy his stories at the club, and have long accustomed ourselves to making due allowances for the artistic temperament.

"We'll buy it," said Pendleton, and we all settled down to listen.

"It was what you said, Pendleton, about Bracey's new South Sea Island story that reminded me of a little experience of my own. I don't deny that Bracey's a clever writer, or even that he knows what he is writing about, for of course he's been out there. But so have I. And I think it's time someone exploded the great Desert Island Bubble. Life on a desert island isn't all that it's cracked up to be—not by a long chalk. I know. I've had some. Wonderful stars, scented nights, spicy breezes, fragrance of hibiscus blooms, man and woman cast away, primitive emotions, elemental passions, and so on—anyone who reads fiction knows it all by heart."

"You mean to say you've been cast away on a desert island in the South Seas with a woman?" I asked.

Hugo took a long drink. That is always a good sign.

"Well, yes, in a way, I suppose I have."

"And you didn't find it all that it's cracked up to be?" said Pendleton. "Let's have the yarn, Hugo."

Hugo settled back in his chair, arranged his legs comfortably, took a meditative pull at his pipe, and began.

"You've all seen Julius K. Manhattan's great film, 'Love Under the Southern Cross,' in which I was the lead."

"I thought May McGilp was," interjected Bryce.

"She thought she was," said Hugo, patiently. "But don't you interrupt me. I am coming to May McGilp. Well, if you recall the story of that marvellous film—Julius K. is a genuine artist, one must admit; spares no money to get his effects and always has the very best people to act for him, of course—if you recall the plot, it opens in New York, and then the hero and heroine get cast away, after a perfectly wonderful scene on the liner in which I hold back the panic-stricken crew with a gun while the women and children are hustled into the boats—all except May McGilp, who won't leave me. Then we bob up on the desert island and work the usual stunts. Well, to get that island business right, Julius K. shipped us all off to the South Seas in a liner with an old tramp steamer in tow, to be wrecked at an appropriate spot.

"As is usual when Julius K. takes hold of a thing himself, everything went O.K. We had a fine time on the voyage, and shot all the pre-wreck stuff on the liner on the way out. And after prospecting around for a bit, Julius found the ideal island. Quite a biggish place, hill in middle of it, island a sort of horseshoe shape, wonderful beach, golden sands and so on, palm trees and fragrant blossoms all complete. And in the bay there was a one-eyed sort of town, with some sort of hotel, several beachcombers, and a couple of missionaries. I don't know exactly what copra is, but of course copra

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trading and pearl-diving were the leading industries. It looked good to Julius, so we landed there, bought up the hotel, and settled down to work. There were plenty of natives, too. But owing to the ravages of the missionaries, all the dusky beauties wore long cotton dresses and all the men hideous kinds of white men's clothes. They had once been head hunters, but now the only heads they hunted were those on coins.

" Our arrival created a stir on the island, of course. There was a bunch of decent white men, who did the honours, and all fell for one or another of the ladies. They took us for picnics and so on, and we had dances at the hotel, and quite a jolly time. But they never took us very far into the bush or jungle, or whatever it is called; it was dangerous for strangers. So we fooled about on the beaches mostly, and amused ourselves while Julius K. and his assistants got ready for the shooting. It was quite an idyllic existence—or it ought to have been. But you know what human nature is: how even the beauties of Nature fail to influence some characters: how petty jealousies creep in and how ungenerous and malicious people can be."

HERE Hugo paused to sigh and, having sighed, took a drink.

" One is the last person in the world to be a snob or anything like that. But there are gradations in society, whether you like it or not, and one owes a certain something to one's position. It doesn't do for a general to mix socially with privates, nor is it quite the thing for a leading man to hobnob too freely with the minor members of the company. The good fellows who lived in the place were quite unable to distinguish between the relative positions of the members of our company. There was one comic actor, quite a good chap in his way, no doubt, but not quite my style. His easy-going, slap-you-on-the-back manner didn't offend those simple traders as it offended me. He had quite a minor part and not a third of my money. But he imposed so upon the inhabitants that I actually found at one or two gatherings that he was placed above me at table, and called upon to make speeches when I was not. Of course, I mean to say, that was not quite the thing; and what with that and one or two other minor annoyances, I thought it would be more in keeping with my dignity to leave the hotel and set up a little establishment of my own. So I hired a little house and a native servant and moved into it as soon as possible. Would you believe it, that gave offence to some of the company, and I heard that I was being called His Nibs, and foolish names like that.

" The fact of my having a personal servant, surely a thing quite in keeping with my position, also seemed to annoy the small-minded. But of course I took no notice. I must tell you about that servant, by the way, because he comes into it later. His name was Kalalua, and he was a browny-yellow chap who'd been caught young by the missionaries and could speak a queer pidgin-English, play the accordion, and cook; he was willing and useful, and we got on very well. He made me quite comfortable, and when his housework was done I had him follow me about to carry my sun umbrella and run messages, and so on.

" At first he used to call me Mistah, and that rather got on my nerves—it didn't sound respectful; and though he meant no offence by it, it seemed a little ridiculous to be addressed as Mistah by one's body servant. I am a great admirer of Conrad, and I had expected that he would call me Tuan, which means lord; but I reflected that this was probably an island at which Conrad had never touched. So I gave orders that I was to be addressed as Tuan in future. He began to tell me that Tuan was a Malay word, not used in these parts, but I pulled him up pretty sharply. And he was inclined to argue, and was so proud of his little scraps of English and his missionary education that he was always shoving his oar in. For example, one day I was explaining things to some of the girls of the company and pointing out the different kinds of palms and flowering shrubs; and when I identified a flower that Polly Carson had found as hibiscus, Kalalua contradicted me flatly. I said nothing at the time, but that night after dinner I talked to him and gave him to understand that if he wished to remain in my service he must never question anything I said. He listened humbly enough.

" ' Velly good, Mistah—him mean Tuan. Kalalua not say anyting lie Tuan say to white Missy.'

" I had said nothing about ladies, but I let it go at that, feeling how hopeless it was to get fine distinctions of behaviour into the fellow's head. You will understand presently why I have said so much about Kalalua.

" I suppose that always when a company of people get together in a small place which they can't get away from, and have not very much to do, small bickerings and jealousies are bound to arise. I am sorry to say that some of the company indulged in behaviour which could only be called thoroughly disloyal to me as leading man. They resented my having a house of my own; they resented my having a servant in attendance; and when they heard Kalalua address

me as Tuan, they were simply furious. Kalalua was a loyal fellow, and adhered strictly to my hint that nobody else should be addressed as Tuan, a title quite unsuitable to the others, socially, I mean to say. But I was surprised when I found that even May McGilp was among my detractors. Of course, she had difficulties of her own. You know what women are, the dear creatures, just a little inclined to be catty to each other when their nerves get frayed. And I believe May resented my escape from the familiarities of the hotel. You see, she couldn't go and live in a house by herself: it would have caused a scandal right away. And she couldn't get any kind of servant except a scrubby little girl from the missionary school in a print frock; whereas Kalalua was rather a fine figure in a coat with brass buttons which I bought for him. And she didn't know the feminine of Tuan, and that bothered her a lot. She said I was giving myself airs—told me so to my face, and we had words about it before the whole company. She even went to Julius K., but Julius was busy and knew she couldn't break her contract because there was no means of getting away just then. He said he was in the motion picture business, not in animal taming, a remark which poor little May interpreted as applying to me and not to herself.

"JULIUS K. had been waiting for some extra fixings for his cameras, and when they arrived he suddenly got busy with the picture. Things went pretty smoothly. We got a small gale very opportunely, which gave us some fine sea pictures. Then we ran the old tramp steamer on a reef and got the shipwreck all right. But when we got to the real desert island stuff, things didn't pan out quite so well. There were some scenes on the beach with May and myself which Julius K. simply could not get right. He said we acted like wooden figures, said we didn't understand the meaning of passion or despair or simple faith. Said he'd murder someone in New York when he got back for passing him such a couple of boneheads. And a lot more like that. Of course, he didn't know that poor May was so bitterly jealous of me that she couldn't, simply couldn't, let herself go. I must say that I was not to blame—my acting was perfectly correct, but it is difficult to be passionate with a girl who looks at you as though you were dirt.

"She had an idea—God knows where she got it from—that she was the star, not me. I tried to reason her out of this, but it was no good. And whenever I put in a little bit of extra business to strengthen what I must say would otherwise have been a very weak story, she simply foamed. You can't get a woman to see reason when she is angry.

"Well, somehow we worked through the whole thing at last, till we got to the rescue scene. That simply would not come off. May's idea of it was that I was lying weak and delirious on the beach while she lit the signal fire and waved the flag which attracted the rescuers. Of course, that was silly, and I said so. As I saw it, she was sleeping peacefully in the hut when I sighted the vessel. I go into the hut—a pretty good touch this—and look down at her sleeping there, and I register the emotions that are tearing me. Shall I wake her, perhaps only to disappointment? Shall I wake her at all? Shall I make any signal to the distant vessel which would bear us off to England and inevitable parting? Why not let civilization go hang and remain here for ever among the noble simplicities and eternal verities, with our lovely care-free offspring playing about our knees?"

"That must have been a big job," ventured Byrce.

"What?" demanded Hugo.

"Registering all that, I mean," said Bryce, nervously, as Hugo eyed him.

"Nothing to an experienced film star, my boy. And when I had registered that, my better nature won, and I rushed out to the beach and waved the flag, and told our story to the British naval officers, without wakening her from her tired sleep—another beautiful touch that, I thought, sparing her all the doubt and anguish that had been mine during those fateful moments. But she didn't see it. And neither did Julius K. We all got a little heated, and Julius K. cursed some, and finally shut down for the day. He said that if tomorrow we couldn't put up something that might do for the worst hick territories—that being, he suggested, the utmost limit of our capacities—he would fire us both and get the missionary and his wife to take the parts. He also said a lot more which I needn't repeat. The fact was that he had lost his temper about something.

"Well, after all, I am a practical man. One has at times to sacrifice one's art for practical considerations or else there would be no pictures, and what would the public do then? I resolved to talk it over with May. Of course, if I had consulted my own dignity entirely I could have thrown up the part there and then; but that would have been hard on Julius K. Manhattan, for whom I had quite an affection. And I hated to see May, who after all had a heart of gold, spoiling her chances. So I sent her a note suggesting a conference.

"May was no fool, and she replied at once.

He said we acted like wooden figures, and didn't understand the meaning of passion or despair or simple faith.

But, as she pointed out, our little differences had been fairly public, and she was unwilling to do anything that might be interpreted by the others as a weakening on her part. She suggested, therefore, that we should meet privately. I saw the point at once, and I am seldom at a loss where delicate situations are concerned. It was practically impossible for us to meet privately on the island. I went to Julius K. and borrowed one of his motor-boats for the afternoon. Not that I knew anything about motors—but Kalalua did and was quite competent to handle it. May thought it a good idea, and accordingly, when the others were enjoying their afternoon siesta, we slipped away from the quay and, rounding one horn of the bay, were soon out of sight of the town.

"It was a perfectly glorious afternoon; the sea was calm and the motion of the boat dispelled the heat. Our island was the largest of a small group, and as we coasted along we could see the others dotted all round, looking like the islands of a dream. May was enchanted and so was I, and we enjoyed the little basket of provisions I had brought and the bottle of fizz which I had not forgotten. Kalalua at the engine was like a child with a new toy: his only thought was to get an extra knot out of her.

"'I wonder,' said May, as she sipped meditatively, 'if those are desert islands?'

"'Probably they are,' I replied.

"'Ask Kalalua—he will know,' she suggested. But Kalalua had heard my remark, and remembering his instructions, I suppose, at once confirmed me.

"'Dem desert island, Missy.'

"'Probably no vessels ever go near them,'

I pursued, 'and a man might live there for ever without seeing another human being.'

"'No ship go near him,' confirmed Kalalua, dutifully.

"May thought it very romantic, and really it was, skimming along that wonderful tropic sea, with those distant isles on the horizon, and a good lunch inside one, and one of the world's loveliest women for companion. All my little grudges against May vanished in that atmosphere; she, too, I think, was in a lenient frame of mind. So I turned the conversation to the subject of the film. I was diplomatic. I made little concessions. I humoured her—she was a woman, after all, even if she happened to be a movie star, and I think that perhaps she felt the influence of—shall I say her environment? Anyhow, we got on famously and came very near a working agreement which would end all Julius K. Manhattan's troubles, when the weather began to change.

"I had noticed that the sea was not quite so smooth; and suddenly it began to grow dark. There was a queer leaden look about the sky, and the sun disappeared. The motion of the boat became disagreeable, and I suggested putting about. I didn't like the look of things at all. A queer mist seemed to rise round us, blotting out the shore.

"'Wind come, Tuan,' said Kalalua. 'Him go for home quick.'

"But we had just turned when the motor broke down. And there we lay, I don't know how long, tossing and joggling about while Kalalua tinkered at the engine and the darkness thickened round us. Poor little May grew paler and paler, and I began to feel very pale myself. In fact, neither of us was a good sailor. When the wind did come we were both beyond caring what happened. I could just tell that we were surrounded by sheets of flying foam and driving rain, and that Kalalua had abandoned the engine and was crouching at the helm and letting her drive before the wind. There was nothing else to do. How the boat lived was a miracle. For what seemed to me like several days and nights I lay in a semi-conscious condition in the bottom of that leaping craft, drenched to the skin with rain and sea. Although Kalalua kept shouting 'Him no very bad wind' at intervals, I knew that he was only doing it to calm May's fears. But I think she was beyond fear. Finally, exhausted Nature asserted herself, and I must have fallen asleep, utterly worn out by the long strain.

"I was awakened by Kalalua shaking me, and shouting in my ear.

"'Ship him wreck, Tuan!' he screamed. 'Wake up. Very danger.'

"I started to my feet. It was morning, the mist and darkness had vanished, but the sea was a vast expanse of great rollers on which we were rapidly being carried towards a sandy beach, over which the huge waves were breaking in sheets of foam. I saw at a glance that the place was entirely unfamiliar to me, and grasped the unpleasant fact that we were about to be cast ashore on some unknown island. There was little time for reflection. It was the work of a moment to rouse my poor little companion and explain the situation. Poor girl, she had been sorely tried, and that made me overlook her first remark.

"'I might have known that you would make a mess of it,' was what she said. But as we were only about three waves from the beach, it did not seem a time for argument. Next moment the boat was swung forward on the crest of a great roller and flung like a pebble on the shore. The bows stove in, the next wave swept us all out, and we were carried up the beach by a great rush of foaming water. Fortunately May, being the lightest, was carried farthest, and managed to crawl on to firm ground; and when the backward rush began, Kalalua, who had dug his heels into the sand, caught hold of me, and we managed to scramble out. We were saved; but it was only by a miracle.

"WE joined May, and, after satisfying ourselves that no one was hurt, sat in silence for some time watching our little craft being dashed backwards and forwards by the waves, till at last a larger one than usual threw it clear. Kalalua and I managed to drag it to safety; but it was obvious that we should never sail in her again, for the bow gaped open and a good deal of the side planking had sprung. Still, it was something—we could use it for firewood, and it somehow comforted me to think that we had got it out of reach of those ravening seas.

"May, who had been wringing the water out of her skirts, joined us.

"'Where are we?' she demanded.

"'Undoubtedly on one of those islands we saw,' I replied, thinking it wiser to break the truth to her at once.

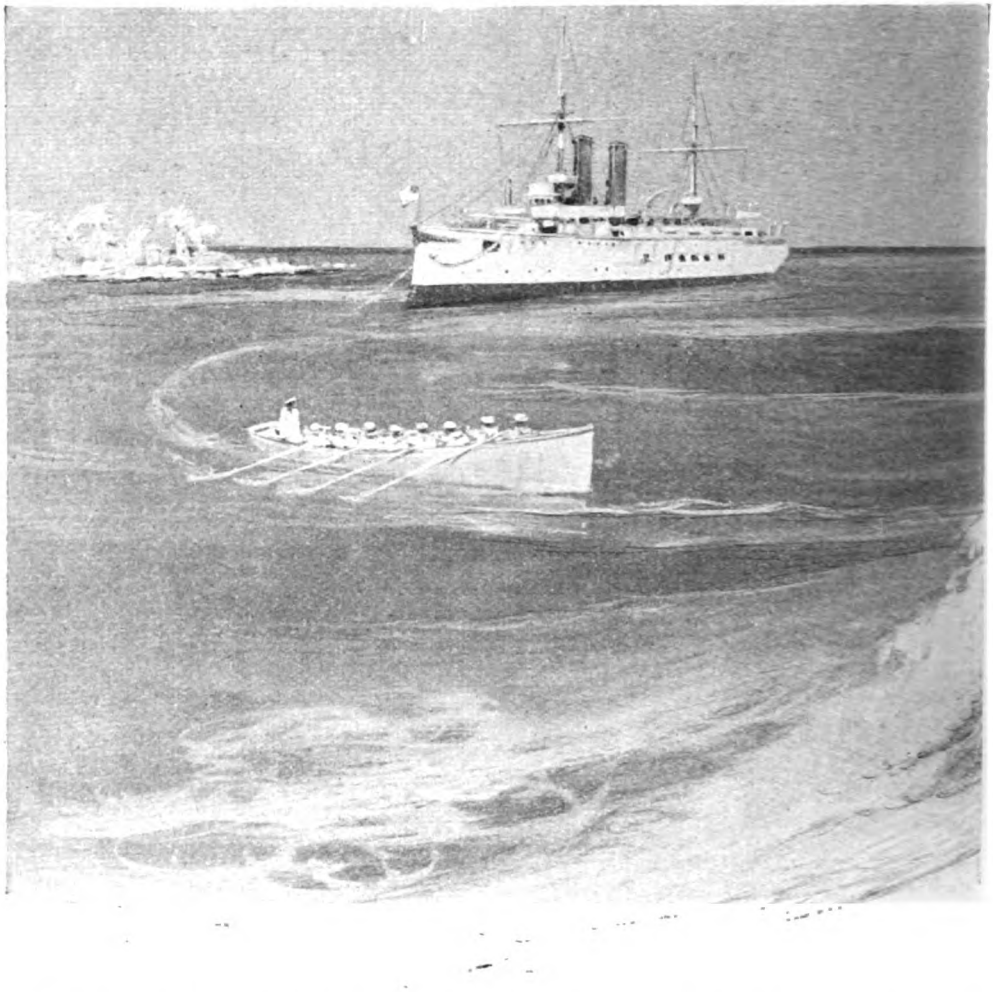
"'Do you mean to say that we have really been wrecked on a desert island?'

"'I have just said so,' I replied a little crossly. I was tired and wet, and the full horror of our situation was evident to me. But she was not content to take it from me. She asked Kalalua.

"Kalalua looked at me with an expression which I could not quite translate.

"'Tuan say desert island,' he replied, after a moment's hesitation. 'What Tuan say right.'

Kalalua and I managed to drag our little craft to safety.



"This apparently convinced May, but she kept on asking foolish questions, like how did we know it was a desert island, and so on. You can't argue with a woman; the thing was obvious enough to me. There were no signs of habitation, it was in the South Seas, there was a reef through a gap in which we had been swept ashore, there were palm trees and things—what else could it be but a desert island? However, just to quiet her, sore and drenched though I was, I set out with Kalalua to explore our surroundings.

"We had not gone far before Kalalua began: 'Tuan say to white Missy this desert island——'

"Now I had deliberately broken the truth to May at once because I thought it best in the circumstances, and I wasn't going to argue with Kalalua as to whether it would have been better to spare her feelings. So I told the man emphatically that I was not going to have my judgment questioned. He relapsed into silence.

"The beach curved away on either side of us with an unbroken wall of vegetation immediately behind it. We followed it for some distance, but it yielded nothing. Certainly no human foot had impressed it for years, perhaps never. We decided to strike inland, where, as far as we could see, right and left the land rose abruptly in a densely-wooded slope without any signs of a clearing. After struggling through the undergrowth for a time we came upon what was practically a cliff, every ledge and crevice of which was matted with vegetation. It looked to me unclimbable. But Kalalua had an idea that if we got to the top we might get a view of our surroundings. I pointed out to him that it was

There we stood, gaunt, unkempt, our arms stretched imploringly towards the boat. What a picture we must have made!

dangerous and that I could not leave the white lady alone too long. Finally he suggested that he should 'go look-see' while I went back to May, to which I consented. I had little fear of any mishap overtaking Kalalua in his native regions.

"I found her sitting on the beach staring out to sea, and flung myself down beside

her. There we were, just like the people in books, marooned perhaps for ever. Dashed romantic, you think, to be marooned with a lovely creature like May McGilp. You know those wonderful fair curls of hers that have broken so many hearts among the picture fans? They were gone—just a mat of straw-coloured wisps of hair, hanging in her eyes, the rain and sea had made of them. And her perfect complexion—gone, too—face all raddled and streaky. And that simple but exquisite little dress she had set out in was just nothing but a crumpled, shrunken rag. She had lost one of her shoes and her stockings were in holes. She wasn't looking her best, boys, and she was in a fearful temper. She told me that it was all my fault, that I should never have exposed her to such risks, that if I hadn't thought myself God Almighty and made trouble with the pictures, we should never have been in this mess. She told me what she and everybody thought of me as an actor and a private citizen. Finally she demanded to know what I was going to do.

"I pointed out that there was in all probability plenty of time ahead of us to make plans.

"She said she was hungry. I explained that there was no food. She told me to go and get some. I asked where I was to get it from. She got very mad, poor girl. Finally I decided to light a fire. That was obviously the first thing to do on a desert island.

"She asked me how I was going to light a fire without matches, and refused to help me to gather wood. But I set about it myself and soon collected enough dry sticks. I had my little triumph, for while she continued to sneer at me, I brought out my monocle, which had escaped destruction, and using it as a burning-glass soon had a merry little blaze going. After that she didn't sulk so much—she saw that I could *do* things. We began to take our natural places as the Man Who Does and the Woman Who Obeys. I shook down some coco-nuts, which she gathered, and we made some sort of a meal.

"She asked me why I didn't set about repairing the boat. When reminded that there were no tools, she said that men on desert islands always managed without tools; to which I replied that tools were invariably washed ashore from the wreck in the carpenter's chest, whereas we had no real wreck. I also reminded her that women on desert islands frequently learned to weave mats with which the broken boats were patched up, and suggested that she should begin weaving. We got quite terse. But I had a packet of wet cigarettes which I dried in the sun, of which I gave her half. We smoked in silence. There was nothing else to do.

"We got hungry again and ate more nuts. They did not agree with us. We slept. It began to get dark. We ate more nuts and felt sick. Flies buzzed round us and stung us. It was very hot on the shore, but when you sat in the bush whole tribes of insects ran over you and bit you.

"THEN night fell. And Kalalua did not come back. We felt that we should never see him again. He had fallen a victim perhaps to some deadly snake, perhaps to cannibals. I tell you, it was miserable.

"It was a glorious tropic night, wonderful stars, flashing constellations, and all that, fragrant breezes, and so on. We were hungry and unwell and frightened. I made some sort of a bed for her in the remains of the boat with leaves and things and went back to my fire. And as I sat there in the warm, spicy darkness, did my thoughts run upon the beautiful creature sleeping so near me? They did—I thought what a damned nuisance she was going to be. Was I stirred by some primitive passion? I was—it was the passion of hunger. And as the night wore on, she left her couch and joined me at the fire. Couldn't sleep for thinking of cannibals, poor thing, and she looked so bedraggled and miserable that I felt sorry for her. Poor little May—she was never to be a film star again! Finally we both fell asleep at opposite sides of the fire.

"Morning came without any sign of poor Kalalua. I ran down the beach, undressed, and plunged into a swarm of stinging jelly-fish. Came back, dressed, gathered nuts. We breakfasted off them, perforce, though our stomachs turned. May looked at me with loathing—I have a strong-growing beard and must have been a pretty awful sight. I left her and went off to explore. I didn't dare to think of what might be in store for me. Months, years, perhaps a lifetime of nuts and May! But I felt it *was* my duty to think things out for her sake, so when I found a convenient rock I lay down behind it and lit a cigarette with my burning-glass. Overcome by my labours, I suppose I must have fallen asleep.

"Some time later I woke with a start. Good heavens, what do you suppose I saw before my eyes?"

"Cannibals!" breathed young Bryce.

"No. Better than cannibals," said Hugo. "There in the bay, quite close inshore, lay a *British man-of-war*. A light cruiser, with bluejackets and officers in white tropical uniforms all complete, according to the best rules for rescues. And they were lowering a boat. That was a big moment, boys!

"I looked round for May. Evidently she had taken advantage of my absence to do a little washing, for various white garments were scattered about on the beach drying. But she had seen it too, and she came running to where I stood.

"What a picture we must have made! But all the world has wept over it since then. There we stood, gaunt, unkempt, hollow-eyed, our faces lit with a new joy of hope, our arms stretched imploringly towards the boat being propelled towards us by the lusty bluejackets. If you are an actor, you can't help putting a little emotion into such a scene, and we were both actors, and rivals at that. Tears ran down May's face—great sobs shook me.

"The keel grated on the beach. Two officers sprang from the stern-sheets. We were surrounded by a crowd of sympathizing sailors. May fainted in the arms of the younger of the two officers, while I stammered forth our story in broken accents to the older one. He handed me a flask, which I emptied at one gulp. May was thanking them, oh, so prettily, for their services. She told them how we had been playing a scene like this for the pictures only a day or two ago, and how dreadful the reality had been. And she wound up by covering her face with her hands and sobbing, 'Oh, I could never *act* such a thing again!

"Here the voice of Julius K. Manhattan broke in.

"'You'll never need to, my dear. You see, you're not really on a desert island. You ran ashore at the north end of our own island, and when Kalalua turned up yesterday and told us about your escape—we were glad to hear you were safe, I'll tell the world—why, we just started in to get to you at once. But it seems these officers of His Britannic Majesty got here first.'

"The officers behaved with suitable modesty.

"'Well, anyhow,' pursued Julius, 'I brought the boys and one of the cameras along with me just in case there was anything to shoot. And I will say that that rescue scene was just the finest of its kind ever, and puts the absolutely finishing touch to the greatest film the world has ever seen. We shot every inch of it—you were too busy with the ship to notice us.'

"And I saw that the camera was really there. Strange coincidence, wasn't it?" asked Hugo, looking round our little group with a searching eye.

"Very!" we agreed, hastily.

"And May McGilp—you said she was never to act again," quavered Bryce, excitedly. "Did she? What happened to her?"

"May McGilp never acted for the films again," said Hugo, solemnly. "She married the younger of the two naval officers. Poor chap!" he added, inconsequently.

Some Features in the Christmas "Strand"

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY:
"The Adventure of the Lion's Mane"
A. CONAN DOYLE

A Hundred Per Cent. "SAPPER"

The Doctor's Love Story
H. de VERE STACPOOLE

Jeeves and the Impending Doom
P. G. WODEHOUSE

etc., etc.

THE BULLET

"Look here," he said

"BECAUSE," said the fair young man, with the well-featured yet scarcely attractive face, "because you are a millionaire and I am a broken man." He moved slightly on the chair at the side of the desk; his eyes wavered from those of the man who sat at the desk; his fingers raising the cigarette to his lips trembled.

The dark man, who looked the senior by a dozen years, but who was of the same age as his visitor, leaned forward, his strong hand under his strong chin, his gaze steady, uncompromising. His words were cool and deliberate.

"And you give that as a good reason, Corliss, why I should help you, or, rather, continue to help you. Well, such a reason does not appeal to me—certainly not in your case."

Corliss gave a little jerk, dropped his cigarette, and in the act of recovering it glanced sidelong at the other. "Why certainly not in my case?" His tone was half timid, half impudent. "Why should not any rich man help any poor man?"

"We are not talking of any poor man," returned the dark man, whose name was Chester. "You and I," he went on, "are what we have made ourselves—I, as you say, a millionaire; you, as you have not said, a broken man over and over again."

"I've never had any luck."

"You have never deserved it. You have wilfully broken yourself. You have never done an honest day's work. You are a crazy gambler——"

"Pardon me, but have you never gambled?"

"I gamble every day of my life, but I gamble sanely on chances I can see and estimate—not on the form of a horse a hundred miles away, or a card in a pack. But I could overlook your crazy gambling if——" Chester paused.

"If what?"

"Well, you may as well have it, Corliss, for we shall probably not meet again." Chester spoke as quietly as ever, but a note of disgust was now in his voice. "You are a swindler of tradesmen, a deceiver of friends, a trifler with women—and I wish to have no more to do with you. Clear out!"

He flung his hand in the direction of the door and sat back in his chair, his mouth hard, his black eyes implacable.

Corliss was on his feet, his face working; but the unexpectedness of the other's denunciation had checked his usual readiness with words. Hitherto he had regarded Chester as a fortunate fool, who knew all about business and nothing of life—life, that is, as he himself understood it. In the

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By J. J. BELL

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

at last, desperately, "give me another chance."

past he had received Chester's benefits without shame, with a gratitude that dwindled as the money was spent, with, indeed, a certain contempt for the man who had believed his story and signed the cheque without question. Nor was there any shame now: only rage of bafflement and terror of a thing that was still hid from the other's knowledge. To himself he was arguing that Chester had "let him down," and, all benefits forgot, he hated Chester accordingly.

"Look here," he said at last, desperately, sweat on his face, "give me another chance."

"No! Five times I have set you on your feet; five times you have—not fallen—I can pardon a man's falling—but, open-eyed, cast yourself down. Go!"

With an abrupt movement, Chester turned his attention to the papers on his desk.

"You may yet be sorry for this," said Corliss, a whine in his voice. "I'm at the limit."

Chester gave no sign that he had heard.

At the end of half a minute Corliss, with a bitter look, went slowly to the door. There he halted.

"By the way," he said, with an odd affectation of ease, "you may not be aware of it, but, as it happens, we are both invited to Richardson's for the week-end."

"I was not aware that we were both invited," Chester answered, making pencillings on a margin. "What about it?"

"I intend to go."

"Why not?"

"And you?" said Corliss, after a moment.

Chester looked up. "Don't be an ass, man," he said, almost good-humouredly. "In the house of a mutual friend I shall meet you courteously, though not cordially. What has passed in this office has been between ourselves, and shall remain so."

"You mean that—you won't give me away to Richardson, one of the few friends I have left?"

"That's a question in ethics," was the dry reply. "Still, I have known you longer than I have known Richardson. I leave Richardson to protect himself—if that be necessary."

"What do you mean?"

"Your indignation is overdone, Corliss. It suggests to me that you have treated Richardson pretty much as you have treated myself. But that, I repeat, is Richardson's affair. Now you must excuse me. I'm busy." Chester bent over his papers.

Corliss hesitated, gnawing his underlip. Then he went out.

THE time was late autumn, but the afternoon atmosphere of the City was close and oppressive. Business men less industrious, or less keen, than Chester were beginning to leave their offices for the day. Corliss, feeling weak, looked at his watch. Licensed places would not open until nearly half an hour had passed. He took a taxi, giving the man the name of an hotel in the West-end. Arrived in the lounge he ordered a drink to be brought to him the moment the clock said "Yes!"

In a corner he sat down with his thoughts. They were awful thoughts for a decent young man to have; but Corliss had ceased to be that. The centre around which his thoughts revolved, and now and then madly whirled, was a slip of paper which lay safely—too safely—behind a steel door in the elegantly-appointed office of a certain "financial agent." To the "financial agent" the slip represented five hundred pounds; to Corliss, who had written his name on it, black ruin. Seven days from now the "financial agent" would request Corliss to pay him the five hundred pounds. and on being disappointed, as he surely would be in Corliss's response, would console himself by applying to Chester, whose name was also on the slip, but who had certainly not put it there.

So Corliss had come, it seemed, to the end of his crooked career. It was inconceivable that the man whose name he had forged, the man from whom he had just been begging the wherewithal to cover the forgery, would condone the crime. Corliss recognized that he had blundered fatally in asking Chester for more money. He perceived too late that his one poor chance had lain in making a full confession.

Desperately he surveyed, as it were, his circle of acquaintances. All were more or less men of substance, for Corliss had never had "any use" for the poorer sort. But was there one among them in whose purse and patience he could hope once more? Not one—unless, perhaps, Richardson, his host during the approaching week-end. And Richardson was one of those damned uncertain people, open-handed one day, close-fisted the next, grudging half a crown for a taxi in the morning, and in the afternoon spending hundreds of pounds at a sale of old books. Yet there was none other, and if Richardson failed him——

The waiter brought the drink, took payment, and retired. Corliss was parched; there was a hot, dry feeling about his eyes; but he drank in sips, with little pauses between.

Flight? Impossible without money, and in these days of wireless almost vain even with a fortune. There was but one sure way by which a man in his situation could evade the tentacles of the Law—but one sure way, and it was a horribly dark way, and the end thereof was—what? In his soul Corliss knew that he would never dare to take it. He might toy with the idea, but the deed was beyond him. He might have the key to the door of escape in his hand, but in the last moment he would surely let the Law snatch it from him.

His thoughts were straying; he whipped them back to concentration on that slip of paper. Seven days—no, it was actually only six days now—six days till Chester, looking at the signature, would say: "That is not mine; I never wrote it." And the solitary chance of keeping the signature from the keen eyes of Chester was hidden like a fragile thread twisted into the uncertain humours of Richardson.

Corliss rose and sat down again. Haste might break the fragile thread. Besides, Richardson was not at his town rooms, but at his place in Oxfordshire, entertaining guests. Out of the question to intrude, either in person or by letter, with such a request upon the man who would be his host

forty-eight hours hence! Distracted as he was, Corliss perceived that it would be folly. Moreover, experience had taught him that the most favourable season in which to approach Richardson was the hour following one of Richardson's very elegant little dinners. There was nothing for it but to endure for two nights and two days—perhaps longer. But how to endure on nothing but the strength of a slender possibility? Was there not, after all, something he could do to protect himself from the gulf that would open at Richardson's refusal?

He ordered another drink. In a way it soothed him; his thoughts were fewer and more orderly. He gave less attention to Richardson and more to Chester. His hate for Chester had ceased to boil and bubble; colder and colder it grew; in the end it was still, controlled by its own bitterness and cruelty, the human essence gone out of it. It was no longer his own fate, but Chester's, that hung on the mood of Richardson.

The lounge had filled up, for the hour of dining was at hand, when Corliss got up and proceeded to one of the telephone-boxes in the hall.

"That you, Loftis? Corliss speaking. If you have no plans, come in and dine with me—don't dress—Planet Hotel."

"Sorry. Too busy." The tone of the speaker was not very cordial, but Corliss did not seem to notice it.

"Sorry, too, old man. I rather want to have a word with you to-night," he said. "Are you in the laboratory?"

"Yes—but I'm afraid I——"

"Look here, Loftis! I'm not a friend in need this time. On the contrary," Corliss proceeded, almost gaily, "I'm practically at the end of my difficulties, and shall be starting to repay very shortly."

"Well, I'm delighted to hear it, Corliss, for your sake as well as my own. If I weren't so awfully rushed here——"

"Can't you leave your devil's brews for an hour?"

"That's just what I can't do. But, I say, I'll be here till midnight——"

"Then I'll look in and smoke one cigarette—say, about ten."

"Right! Come straight through the garden to the laboratory door. 'Bye."

Corliss went to his club for dinner, though he was aware that men there were beginning to avoid his company. There was one man, however, whom he wanted to see, and of whom he was not in any way afraid. In the corner of the smoke-room he handed this man a scrap of paper bearing a telephone number.

"At ten precisely," he said, "you will get this number and ask for Mr. Lester. On being told that there is no Mr. Lester, you will pretend to be hearing badly and repeat your question, keeping the subscriber at the 'phone for at least a minute. Then you will apologize for having used the wrong number, and cut off. That's all; but it's important that you do it punctually."

"I quite understand," said the other. He had done odder things than this for Corliss. "Girl, I suppose?"

"Some letters I want to get back," said Corliss. "What will you drink?"

THE little house-party at Richardson's was a bachelor one. None of the five men, two of them brothers, was particularly keen on Bridge, and the evenings were spent between the billiard-room and the library. Chester was the only guest who respected the host's passion for old books; as the host put it, the poison was already working in Chester, who would surely develop into the greediest of collectors, as certain millionaires had done before him. At any rate, Chester seemed fascinated by the more ancient tomes which were lodged in a small annexe to the library proper, wherein he would ask leave to sit for an hour after the others were gone to bed.

It was Sunday night, and there would be an early start for London in the morning. At dinner, which was just over, Richardson had mentioned that he would be travelling too. Fortune had not been kind to Corliss. Everything seemed to have conspired against his obtaining a moment alone with his host. Now, as a move was being made to the billiard-room, feverish and desperate, he forced himself to whisper his request for an interview.

Without a word, Richardson turned and led the way to the library. Corliss followed, not altogether without hope. Since Friday Richardson had been uniformly amiable; to-night at dinner he had exhibited his most genial side. In the library, however, Corliss experienced a sudden chill.

Richardson shut the door and advanced to the big writing-table. He did not sit, nor invite his guest to do so. He simply stood, waiting. And the moment the nature of Corliss's communication became clear to him, he held up his hand.

"No!" he said, quietly. "No, Corliss. Spare yourself and me. You will find me in the billiard-room." He left the library.

Corliss sat down on the nearest chair, and for a while was very still. He did not hate Richardson; perhaps he did not hate Chester just then. He thought only of himself, of his own preservation.

About ten he went to the billiard-room. A game of " Snooker " had just ended. He was invited to join in a new game, but said he preferred to look on. There were drinks on a side-table ; he helped himself lavishly and took a seat in the shadow. He ought, he knew, to have offered to mark, but he also knew that he could not have added the scores correctly. He sat watching the coloured balls on the light-flooded green, saw them disappear, one by one, into pockets, without knowing, or caring, who had made the shot. He did not wish to see the face of the player, lest it should be Chester's. He would fain have retired, but there was a remark he wanted to make, if only he could find a natural opening. Further, he desired to learn whether Chester intended to sit late in the library.

The game ended. They started another. Quietly Corliss helped himself to more brandy, but not so much. He was aiming at self-confidence rather than recklessness.

Presently he became aware that Richardson was standing close to him.

" Would anyone mind," said Corliss, in a fairly even voice, " if I raised this window for a few minutes ? "

" By all means, Corliss," the host pleasantly replied. " Allow me. It's a bit close to-night." He unfastened and threw up the sash.

Corliss stepped over and peered into the still, dark night. Then he fingered the fastening.

" I suppose this would keep out a burglar, Richardson ? " he said, casually.

" Nothing," Richardson returned, with a laugh, " will keep out a first-class burglar. The servants fasten the windows at night, but it's a matter of form. We don't bother about burglars here."

" Still," put in one of the men, " yours would be a handy house for the gentry."

" The library windows, for instance," remarked Chester.

" Only respectable people like you would want to burgle my library," said the host, and there was a general laugh. " I begin to be suspicious of your late sittings, Chester. Monkeying with the window fastenings—eh ? "

" That's it ! " replied Chester. " To-night I hope to take impressions of the keys in the doors."

" You're not going to sit up to-night ! Breakfast at seven-thirty, you know."

" Five hours' sleep satisfies me. With your permission, Richardson, I will have one more——"

" My dear fellow, my house is at your disposal. Do as you will. But I think we ordinary sluggards might turn in at eleven. What do you say ? "

The brothers agreed.

" If you will excuse me, Richardson," said Corliss, " I'll turn in now. I—I want a long sleep."

" Good night, Corliss," said Richardson, sympathetically, thinking he understood. " You look a bit done up. If you want anything, be sure to ring."

" Thanks. Good night, everybody." It was little more than a whisper.

Chester was standing near the door. " Good night, Corliss," he said, kindly enough, and seemed about to say more.

But Corliss, without looking up, went out quickly, closing the door. In the hall he paused, listening, then slipped into the library, laid his cigarette-case on the big table, and out again.

He ascended slowly. In his room he turned the key and sat down, breathing heavily. His face was white and wet. Though the room was warmed by a cheery fire, he shivered.

It was not long before he heard Richardson and the brothers come upstairs. Their rooms, as he had taken care to learn, were in the other corridor. Chester's was almost exactly opposite his own.

Presently Richardson came and tapped on the door.

" All right, Corliss ? "

" All right, thanks. I've taken some tabloids and expect to be asleep in five minutes. Good night."

" Good night." Richardson, who was a little uneasy about his guest, lingered.

Had Corliss opened the door then, things might have turned out differently, but he sat silently cursing the interrupter of his dizzy thoughts, and Richardson went softly away. Corliss heard his door close.

AT the end of half an hour Corliss got up. He unlocked the smaller of his suit-cases, which had not come under the valet's inspection, and brought out a long-barrelled air-pistol, powerful but not too noisy at its work ; also a cardboard box containing three sharp-nosed bullets and a pair of light forceps. He had travelled two hundred and fifty miles by rail in order to purchase these things, and had taken care to go to the shops on foot, walking with a limp and wearing a wig, a moustache, and tinted glasses.

He placed the pistol and forceps on the table by the bedside. Two of the bullets he slipped into his vest-pocket, from which he took a penknife. Drawing a chair to the table, he proceeded with the smaller blade to score little rifts in the side of the third bullet, turning it round till they numbered about a score. He then cautiously scraped the bullet to remove roughness produced by

the first operation, and as cautiously removed the tiny scrapings from the table to the fire, wherein he placed also the empty cardboard box.

And now he was come to the more delicate part of the business. On the table he laid a half-sheet of thick note-paper, and upon it from a tube squeezed a blob of a glycerine preparation. He brought out a small flat wooden box with a close-fitting top, purchased on the evening of his visit to Loftis, the chemist. It contained about half a teaspoonful of a fine white crystalline powder, which he had taken from a squat bottle in the laboratory safe while Loftis was at the telephone. Loftis was a specialist in poisons, and had, not so long ago, pointed out to Corliss the squat bottle as containing one of the deadliest substances known to science.

Having opened the pistol, he inserted the bullet by means of the forceps.

Corliss now, holding his breath, emptied the powder upon the paper and gave the box to the fire. With a match he mixed powder and glycerine into a thick paste, then burned the match. Taking the scored bullet in the forceps, he rubbed and rolled it in the paste. Finally, having opened the pistol, he, still by means of the forceps, inserted the bullet. For the time being he laid the open weapon on the table and proceeded to burn the half-sheet of note-paper.

Remained the forceps to dispose of. Turning back the rug, he examined the floor. It was a good floor, but not perfect. He found a crevice between planks. With a little effort the forceps went down and out of sight. He replaced the rug, and stood sweating.

When he was steady he closed the pistol, thus compressing the air in the chamber.

He sat down and looked at his watch. Too early! Only eleven-thirty. He must wait for an hour.

He began to shake in a dreadful fashion, and had recourse to a flask. But he must not, he warned himself, overdo the brandy. Huddling over the fire, he waited—waited.

Down in the hall an ancient clock, with a remarkably clear bell, began to tell midnight. At the first stroke Corliss started; at the second he relapsed and took to

counting under his breath. Another half-hour to wait. Yet he was afraid of delaying too long. Chester had got to die in any case, but it would be ever so much simpler to kill him in the library. To Corliss's mind, Chester was now become nothing but a dangerous, wicked enemy. Corliss was acting simply to ensure his own preservation. The eyes of Chester must never look upon that slip of paper with his name upon it.

At twenty minutes past twelve Corliss got up. Taking up the pistol, he tested his nerves by presenting it at a small object on the dressing-table. His nerves were not good; the barrel wavered. He took more brandy. In his own case, at least, he knew that there was a point at which alcohol, the wrecker, had a steadying or stiffening influence, if only for the space of a few minutes. For a little while he kept still, and then repeated the test. That was better! One more dose—a very small one—of the spirit——

He removed his slippers, went to the door, switched off the light, and stood listening. Not a sound. Softly he opened the door and listened again. With the pistol tucked under the left wing of his dinner jacket he stepped into the corridor, which was lighted by an orange-tinted bulb. It struck him how providential it was that the stair was a stone one.

He stood in the half-light of the hall. The library was towards the rear of the house on the left; its door stood partly open, allowing a glimpse of an almost dark interior. He stole towards it, saying to himself: "I have come down for my cigarette-case."

He managed to enter without touching the door. The library was not so dark after all. The heavy curtains on the doorway of the annexe had not been drawn close; a space of about six inches separated them; and though the lamp within was shaded, a certain amount of illumination escaped into the larger room.

Corliss was conscious of an odour of Turkish tobacco smoke, not stale. There was no sound, and from his halting-place he could see nothing of Chester. He stole farther into the room, keeping away, however, from the curtain.

Suddenly he stopped. Into his view had come a small table, on which was an ash-tray containing a cigarette that appeared to be burning itself away—till a hand appeared and removed it, as it were, from the picture. Presently, through a cloudlet of smoke, the hand came back and replaced the cigarette on the tray.

Corliss took a soft step forward, and saw a hand holding a quarto-size volume bound in ancient-looking parchment. Another step, and he saw Chester, or, at least, Chester's head and shoulders. And at that his nerves threatened to fail, his sight to confound him, for it seemed to him that he was seeing through a window. Chester was seated in a low-backed easy-chair, perfectly still, absorbed in the yellowed page. He was facing the aperture between the curtains. Had he raised his head he would have been looking directly at Corliss.

Corliss, feeling as though he were sinking into a cold vapour, sinking out of sight of his one salvation, made a supreme effort of will, set his teeth, and presented the pistol, telling himself for the tenth time that the bullet carried poison to slay a hundred men, that the slightest wound would be swiftly fatal.

"God!" he cried under his breath, and pressed the trigger.

In his ears the mild report sounded as a thunder-clap—but he heard also the sharp crack of an impact not on flesh. Looking not to see what had happened—now half-blind with terror—he turned and darted behind the curtains of one of the deep windows.

He had missed! He must pull himself together and play his part. He had come down for his cigarette-case, and found a burglar in the act of shooting. The burglar had escaped by the window. Corliss turned to undo the fastenings—and paused. Why was there no sound from the annexe?

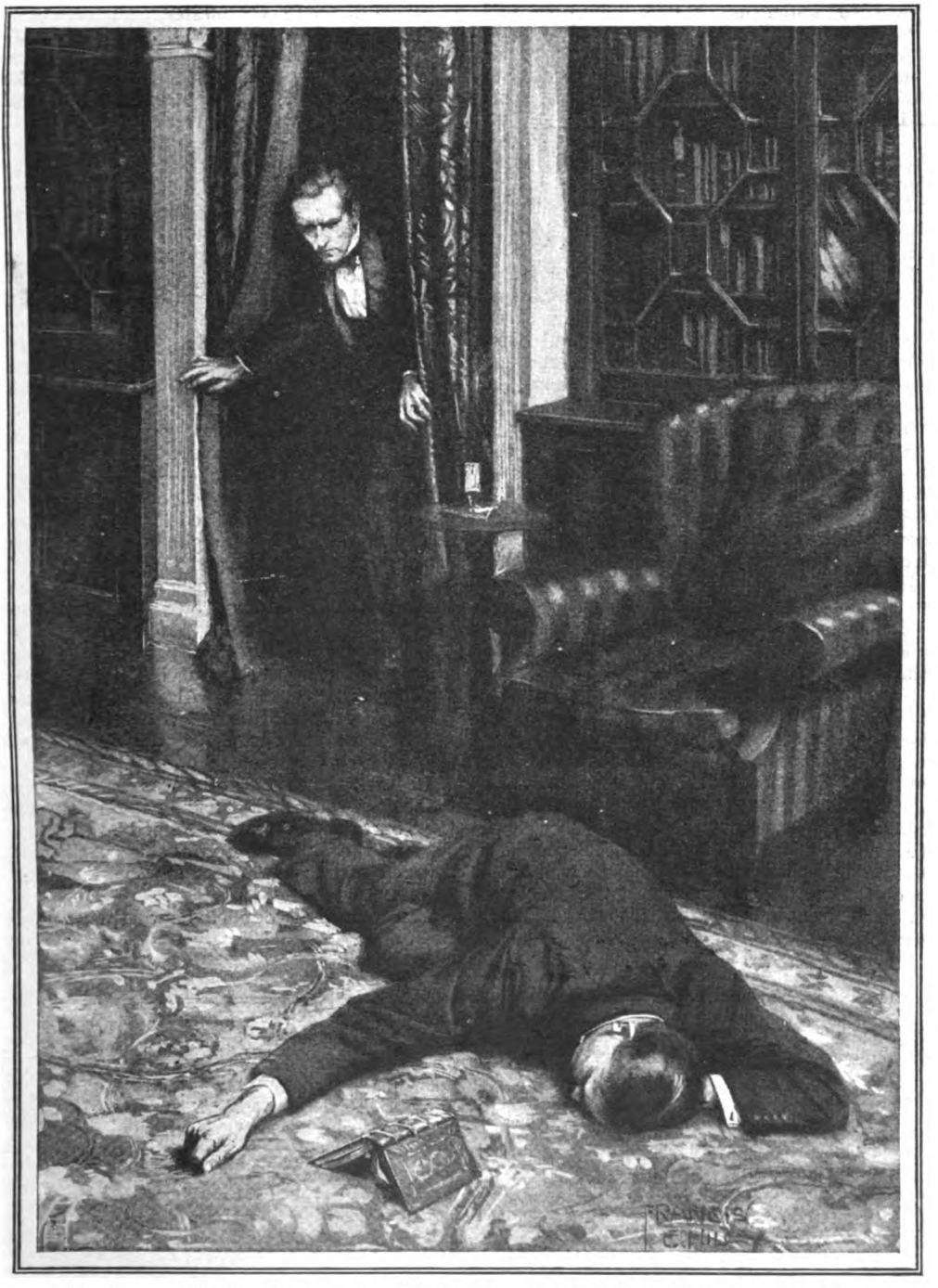
But even as he listened there came a groan. It was followed by a soft thud—the sound of a body falling a short distance on a thickly carpeted floor.

He had not missed! Corliss revived as one injected with a potent drug: his brain cleared.

A LONG, long wait—all things silent save his own pulses—and Corliss set to work to open the window. The sash went up without noise, and he looked out into blackness filled with the whisper of rain. He polished the pistol with a bunch of curtain and threw it into the night. The rain, he told himself, would remove any last traces of finger-prints. Also he threw out the two bullets taken from his vest-pocket. The burglar had dropped these things in his flight.

Leaving the window wide, and having rubbed with the curtain the parts he had touched, Corliss crossed the library and peeped into the annexe.

Chester lay sprawled, face down, on the carpet, one arm thrown out, the hand clenched, the other crooked under the head. The wound—it must have been little more than a graze, thought Corliss, for the bullet had starred a tall, narrow, antique mirror



Corliss peeped into the annexe. Chester lay sprawled, face down, on the carpet.

which reached from near the floor to the picture-moulding—the wound was not visible. Corliss did not wish to see it. The poison had been quick, as Corliss had expected, but he was puzzled by the fact that the low easy-chair was now with its

back to him. It looked as though there had been a brief but violent struggle, yet Corliss had not heard anything of the sort; moreover, the poison ought not to have created any convulsion, but produced a swift paralysis.

But what did it matter? Chester was dead, and his successors would have to honour his signature, concerning which Corliss had an incontrovertible statement all ready.

CORLISS turned away from the sight, which was beginning to strike him as rather pathetic—a millionaire who would never more sign a cheque! His head was now heavy and very hot; his hands were very cold. The sense of triumph was fading fast. The virtue of the alcohol had gone; the vice of it remained. His first idea of rousing the house seemed no longer so clever and cunning. Far safer to go to bed and let the discovery be made in the ordinary course; drug himself so that he should be hard to awaken in the morning.

Yes; he would get to bed. But stop a moment! Had he remembered everything—left no traces? Let him go over it all once more. He found it rather difficult to think coherently.

The third bullet! Would it not be wise to get it out of the way, seeing that it could be so easily secured? In all probability it was lying somewhere in front of the starred mirror. Why leave it for the detectives? Suppose, for instance, that they wanted to consult a poison expert: suppose they went to Loftis—and suppose Loftis, inspired by the devil, took it into his head to weigh, in one of those delicate balances, the contents of that squat bottle in his safe! And suppose——

He *must* secure the bullet! In a state of panic he pushed between the curtains, fell on his knees, and began to search, his handkerchief held ready in his left hand for the deadly thing, while he supported himself on his right. Working nearer to the mirror, he avoided some glittering splinters, and——

A slight sound, real or fancied, caused him to turn his head in awful fright. Had Chester moved? No! Nothing but imagination! Chester would never move again!

Corliss went on with his search, but now in frantic fashion. A spicule of glass stabbed his palm, lacerating it slightly. He took no notice.

And then a voice said: "You, Corliss! Well, I'm devilish glad to see you! You were right about burglars after all!" And Chester rose steadily to his feet.

For an instant Corliss, gaping, sat up, then fell forward on his hands.

"Looking for the bullet—eh?" Chester went on. "Did you see the scoundrel? I can only guess that he fired at my reflection in the mirror, but I thought it wise, in case he came again, to pretend I was done for." A pause. "I say, Corliss, what's the matter? Did he hurt you? Let me help you."

Corliss turned laboriously into a sitting posture. He sat staring at his right hand, which was clenched. Alarmed by his pallor, Chester muttered "Water"—looked vainly around, darted at the bell, then dashed from the room.

In less than a minute he was back with a tumbler of water. But as he passed between the curtains, Corliss drooped sideways. And at the sight of Corliss's face, Chester stopped short; the glass slipped from his fingers.

Later, in the wounded hand, they found the bullet.

A New

SHERLOCK HOLMES

Story,

"The Adventure of the Lion's Mane,"

By A. CONAN DOYLE,

will be one of the many good things in the Christmas "Strand."

PARADE.
Recruits at Peel House lined up for the morning inspection.

THE POLICEMAN'S UNIVERSITY

How a Metropolitan Constable is Trained

By FENN SHERIE

Illustrated with photographs specially taken for "The Strand Magazine."

"YOUR policemen—they are wonderful!"

That phrase, so often used by distinguished visitors to our shores, expresses a truth which every Englishman is proud to endorse. The more we see of the Metropolitan police-constable the more we marvel at the many admirable qualities he possesses. It is no exaggeration to say that the average London "Bobby" is expected to include in his make-up, in varying degrees, some of the discipline of the soldier, the fearlessness of the fireman, the tact of the diplomat, the learning of the lawyer, the skill of the doctor, the patience of the nursemaid, and the erudition of the encyclopædia. How does he acquire them?

The miracle which transforms an ordinary civilian from the office, factory, or farm into a smart young constable is performed at Peel House, the official training centre of the Metropolitan Police, not far from Victoria Station.

Peel House is neither a school nor a barracks. It is, in effect, a policemen's university—an institution with a tradition, in which the formation of character, the encouragement of good fellowship, and the development of *esprit de corps* are reckoned just as important as the teaching of drills and lessons.

Picture a vast building, capable of housing two hundred men, each with his private cubicle and a set of three "safes" in which to store clothing, boots, and food. Visualize a billiard-room, a canteen, a concert hall, a gymnasium, a library, a hospital, two dining halls, three bath houses, thirteen class-rooms, and a parade ground, and you will have a good mind's-eye view of Peel House.

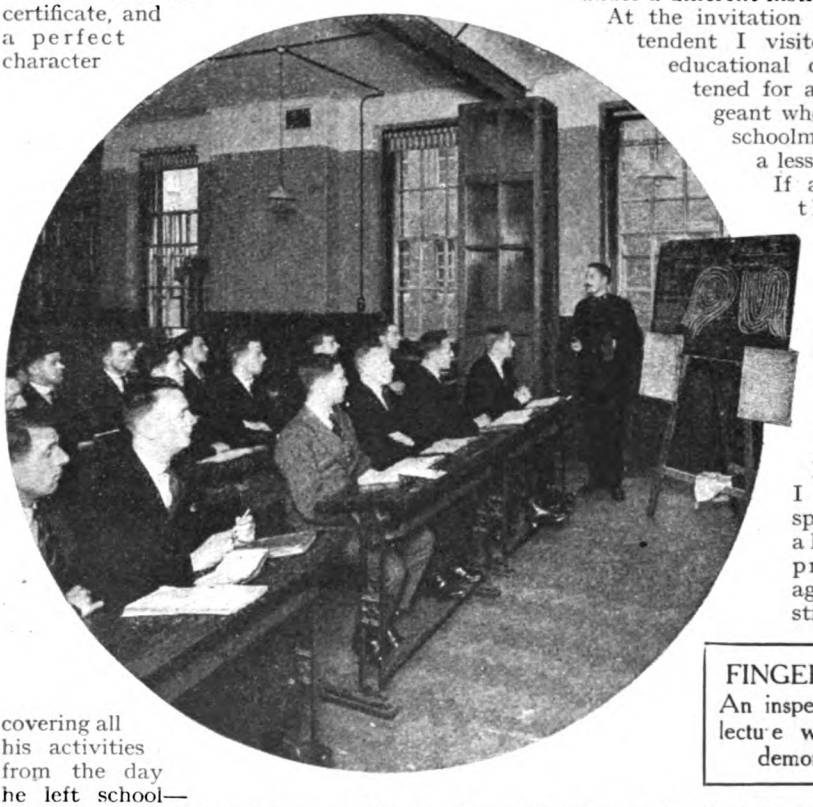
Now come with me, if you please, and see what an enormous amount the present-day policeman has to learn. Perhaps you have a vague idea that so long as he knows how to say "What's all this?" "Pass along, please," and "Everything you say will be taken down and used in evidence," his education is complete?

Oh, no! He has to learn not to split his infinitives or double his negatives. He has to know the difference between larceny and false pretences, and to be able to distinguish a felony from a misdemeanour. He has to acquire physical strength and skill, besides a great deal of knowledge about dogs, street nuisances, aeroplanes, finger-prints, accidents, forgeries, licences, and a host of other things.

However, let us drop generalities and come to particulars.

The perfection of the police force is largely

a matter of elimination. Out of every hundred men who present themselves not more than an average of fifteen are finally retained. It happens this way. The candidate first applies to his local police-station. If he fulfils the necessary qualifications—that is, if he is over five feet nine, has a medical certificate, and a perfect character covering all his activities from the day he left school—his name is entered and forwarded to headquarters.



FINGER-PRINTS.
An inspector giving a lecture with practical demonstrations.

Applicants from all over the country are called up to Scotland Yard at the rate of about one hundred a week. Here they undergo a further medical examination, which is so severe that, despite the fact that many have been passed by their local doctors, on an average sixty-five per cent. are rejected—mostly on account of minor faults.

Next the candidates are interviewed by a Selection Committee, with the result that probably another fifteen are weeded out. Thus, as a general rule, not more than twenty applicants are taken into the school at a time.

Upon arrival at Peel House they are subjected to an educational test. Sometimes, at the first sitting, a number of men fail. Of these, however, some show sufficient promise to warrant a further trial, and the authorities are prepared to give them two or three weeks' schooling. The test, however, must be passed before a man is accepted for training in police work. This policy of " putting back " men who fail to pass the various tests at the first attempt is maintained throughout the course, so that every man who needs it is given a fresh chance under a different instructor.

At the invitation of the superintendent I visited one of the educational classes and listened for a while to a sergeant who, in the *rôle* of schoolmaster, was giving a lesson in grammar. If at any time in the future a policeman says to me, " You didn't ought to have done that," I shall know what to do. I shall threaten to tell his teacher about it.

In the next room I found an inspector delivering a lecture on finger-prints. My imagination being stirred, I asked to be allowed to sit at the back of the class and become, for the time being, one of the " recruits."

First of all some ordinary sheets of exercise-book paper were handed round, and we were told to touch them with our fingers. Curious to test the efficiency of the system, I carefully wiped my fingers with my handkerchief and then placed them, with the lightest possible touch, on the paper. Nevertheless, when my finger-prints were developed they stood out almost as clearly as if they had been printed in black ink!

The lecture only covered such aspects of the subject as concern the young constable, but it contained quite a lot of interesting information. For example, I learned that a prisoner, when charged, need not have his finger-prints taken if he objects; that finger-prints of known male-factors can be identified from the files at Scotland Yard in less than five minutes;

and that, no matter how many finger-prints may be received at the Yard at eight o'clock in the morning, information concerning their owners, if available from records, will be sent by messenger or telephone to the various courts that same morning, before the cases are brought up for trial.

It was in this class, by the way, that I first observed that there were ladies in the school. The Women Police, it appears, go through precisely the same training as the men, the distinctions of sex being observed only in the physical training and first-aid classes.

" The women candidates, as a rule, are remarkably quick to learn," one of the instructors told me. " Once they have passed the educational test, it is seldom that they take longer than nine weeks—the minimum time—to get through the course."

In another class-room a sergeant was discussing disputes arising out of passengers in public vehicles refusing to pay their fares. The young constable requires to know a great deal about the law or he may get himself into trouble for making wrongful arrests. For example, the class was told how to deal with a case of bilking a cabman, and what action is justified should a person refuse to pay a bus or tram fare. In some circumstances the constable is entitled to make an arrest; in others he is not. The differentiation is by no means simple

Passing on, picking up a scrap of knowledge here and acquiring a new experience there, I came to another class which was enjoying a lecture on counterfeit notes and coins. " Enjoying " is just the word, for the instructors at Peel House seem to know the art of being interesting. I commented upon this to the superintendent.

" Yes," he agreed. " I would rather an instructor spent nearly half the time allotted for a lesson in arousing the interest of his hearers than that he should try to ' cram ' them when they are not in the proper mood. To give a lesson to a class without first gripping their attention is like giving food to men who are not hungry. They will refuse to swallow it or, having swallowed it, fail to digest it. A lesson must be made interesting so as to ensure sustained attention and permanent benefit."

The men who train the police recruits, besides being skilled instructors, are all students of human nature; and, having learned the subjects they teach in the school of practical experience, they are often able to serve them up in the form of interesting yarns.

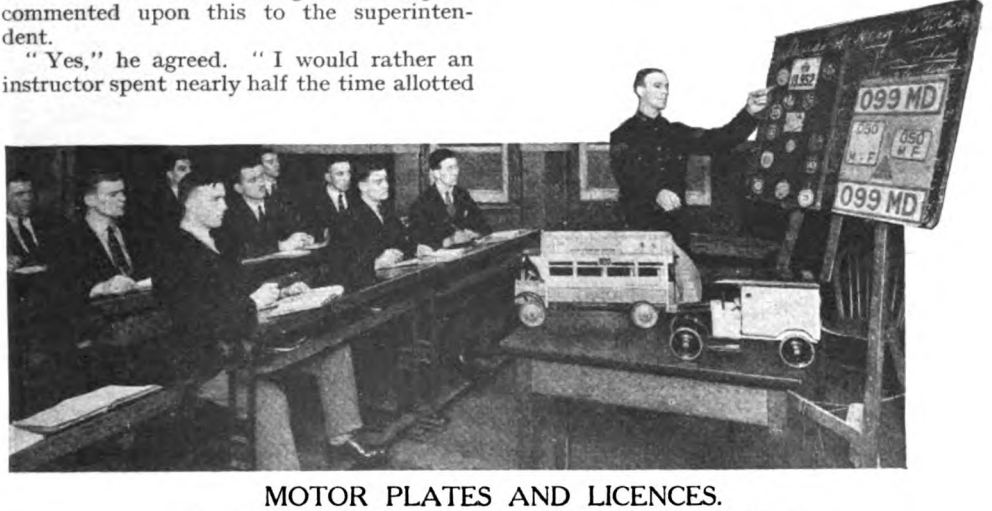
" I remember when I was a young constable," a stalwart sergeant was saying as I entered the room, " I was called upon by a shopkeeper to arrest a man for trying to pass a bad half-crown. The man declared it was a good one. The shopkeeper banged it on the counter and showed that it did not ring. Then I had a look at the coin. It seemed all right in appearance—all the same, it didn't ring. Now I wasn't in a position to say which one of them was wrong. What ought I to have done ? "

A young candidate jumped to his feet.

" You should have arrested the man as requested and put the responsibility of charging him on to the shopman," he replied.

" Good heavens, no ! You young fellows seem to think that a constable—because he is a constable—can arrest a man just whenever he thinks fit. You must get that idea out of your heads."

Another pupil stood up.



MOTOR PLATES AND LICENCES.

An instructor discoursing on a particularly intricate subject.

" I should have asked them both to come to the nearest chemist's and have the coin tested," he said.

" Quite a sensible answer. Well, supposing the chemist had said the coin was a bad one, what should I have done then ? "

There was no reply. Presumably the class still had the idea of an arrest at the back of their minds, but were hesitating to admit it.

" Well, it depends upon the circumstances," the instructor went on. " The main point to remember in charges of this sort is that there must be evidence of *guilty knowledge*. Now just make a note of that, and turn to your text-books and——"

Time was pressing and I had to pass on, but I had heard sufficient to increase my wonderment at the amount of legal knowledge the young constable is expected to acquire in his brief course of training.

Crossing the parade ground, dodging several squads which were being drilled by an instructor who had been a drill-sergeant in the Guards—and sounded like it—I came to another class assembled round a realistic representation of a street accident. Apparently a motor van had skidded, struck a street refuge, and come into collision with a private car. A mud-guard of the van was damaged, the front lamp of the private car had been knocked off and broken, and the dummy street refuge seemed to have suffered considerably. Otherwise there was nothing serious.

The class was listening intently whilst the instructor, acting as the constable on the beat, noted all the necessary particulars, made measurements of distances and skid-marks, and wrote down the statements of the two drivers and other " witnesses."

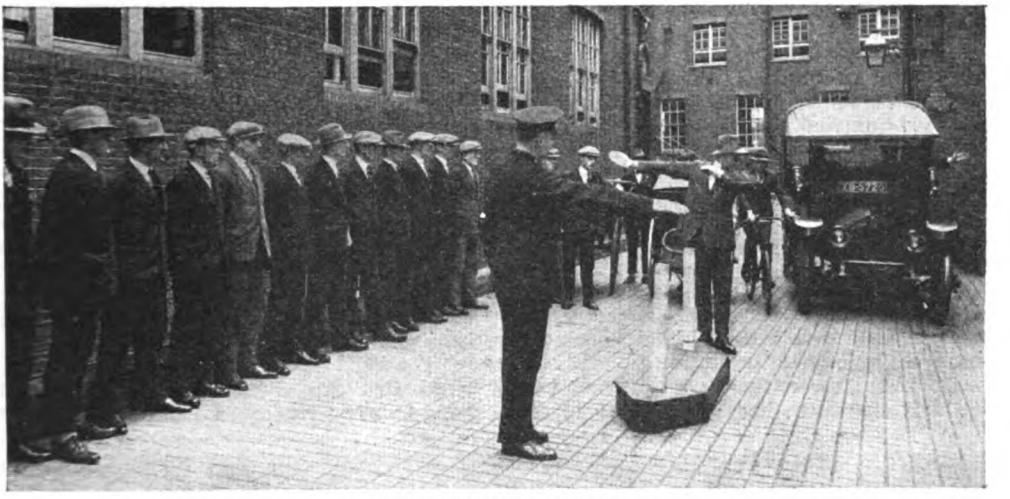
I commented upon the amount of detail which the instructor had entered in his official pocket-book.

" Yes, it seems a lot," said one of the inspectors, " but even the report of a simple offence such as an obscured identification plate involves no fewer than twenty separate particulars, all of which must be taken down in proper sequence. And when it comes to a street accident, which may lead to numerous complications and legal actions, the constable has to take great care that no detail is overlooked. If you wait a while you will see a class studying a more difficult case."

I waited. The case in point was one in which a car was supposed to have knocked a youth off his bicycle. Two instructors, acting the part of constables, came upon the scene. One rendered first aid whilst the other performed with the pocket-book. A recruit was called out from the class and sent to telephone for an ambulance. The whole performance was carried out so quietly and so convincingly that it was difficult to realize that it was a fake. Then, as a final touch of realism, a real ambulance arrived, the " injured " man was carefully transferred to a stretcher, lifted into the car, and driven away !

STREET ACCIDENTS.

Budding policemen receiving a realistic object-lesson.



TRAFFIC CONTROL.
Recruits learning how to deal with the new one-way system.

Traffic control is taught in an equally practical manner.

After a few lectures the recruits are taken to a dummy " cross-road " and each man in turn is made to try his hand at controlling real traffic.

The problems involved are many and varied. I saw one young man trying to deal with two hand-carts that wished to cross in front of him from opposite directions, a motor-van behind him that wanted to proceed straight ahead, and, behind this, a cyclist who was signalling his intention to turn to the left. In addition to the traffic there was a small crowd of " pedestrians " who had got half-way across the road and had become stranded on a refuge! The recruit hesitated for a second. The motor-van nearly ran over him. He raised his hand suddenly, and the driver jammed on his brakes, with the result that the cyclist behind instantly crashed into him. It was done so realistically that, for a moment, I believed that a real accident had occurred. However, it soon became clear that the smash had been prearranged with the object of giving the recruit an unforgettable lesson on the dangers of acting too impulsively.

All the candidates at Peel House are now learning the complications involved by the new " gyratory system," with one-way routes in which the traffic lines up on both sides of the roadway. Traffic regulation necessitates a thorough knowledge of hand-signals and calls for a great deal of initiative in " filtration "—that is, sorting out the slow and fast-moving vehicles and causing some to proceed and others to remain, according to the direction in which they are travelling—with the object of keeping the stream of vehicles flowing with as few " hold-ups " as possible.

With such thorough training as this it is no wonder that the London policeman has gained a reputation for reliability in emergencies. The authorities are not satisfied to test a man by the knowledge he possesses; he will not be passed out as trained until he knows how to apply that knowledge readily and accurately. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that every man must also be in possession of a first-aid certificate from the St. John's Ambulance Corps before his appointment is confirmed.

Realism appears to be the keynote of most of the advanced lessons in the syllabus. Later in the day I saw enacted a thrilling little drama in three scenes, representing an arrest for theft, the making of the charge, and, finally, the trial in the police-court.

Scene I. was an exterior. The recruits were told that the portion of the parade ground selected represented " High Street," and that a near-by doorway fronted by a row of steps was supposed to be a shop, " No. 27." They were then instructed to watch closely and observe what happened.

Along the street came a constable, strolling in the usual leisurely fashion of a " Bobby " on his beat. About two yards ahead of him walked a civilian, outwardly peaceful and calm and apparently quite unaware of the impending drama.

Suddenly from the doorway of " No. 27 " another civilian ran out, gesticulating and pointing. Breathless and excited, he indicated to the constable that he wanted the other man arrested. The man was by now

a few yards ahead, but the policeman soon caught him up.

" 'Ere, what's the game ? " said the man who had been detained, indignantly.

" Just a moment, sir," was all that the policeman replied.

By this time the gentleman from number twenty-seven had arrived.

" This man came into my shop about half an hour ago and stole a wallet from off the counter. I want you to arrest him," he said.

" I'm not the man," shouted the accused, with wrathful indignation. However, he soon yielded to a little forceful persuasion and went quietly to the station.

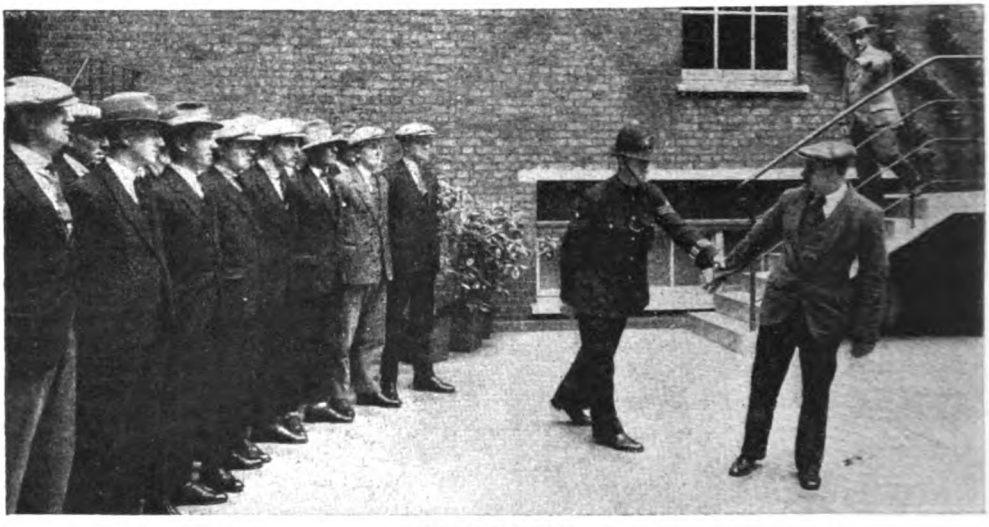
The recruits were then told that each man individually must imagine himself in the position of the constable in the case. It was pointed out that the facts must be carefully memorized, so that they could be entered in the official pocket-book at the earliest opportunity—in this instance, on arrival at the police-station.

Scene II. was a class-room, furnished to represent the charge-room at the " station." The constable had arrived with his prisoner and the prosecutor, and was busy making notes in his pocket-book. The prisoner was sitting on a chair, cap in hand, with an expression of injured innocence upon his features.

" Well, Jones," said the station officer to the constable. " What's this ? "

" Sir," replied the constable, pulling himself up smartly. " About two-thirty p.m. to-day I was on duty in High Street. I was walking past number twenty-seven and prisoner was walking a few yards ahead of me. Suddenly this gentleman ran out of number twenty-seven and said something to me. In consequence of what he said I ran after prisoner and detained him until the arrival of prosecutor. Then, in the presence and hearing of the prisoner, prosecutor said " (here the constable pulled out his notebook and read out the words with the precision of a small child taking a lesson in a kindergarten class) : " ' This man came into my shop about half an hour ago and stole a wallet from off the counter. I want you to arrest him.'

" I turned to prisoner and said, ' You heard this gentleman's statement. I am going to arrest you on that charge,' to which he replied " (here he referred to the notebook again), " ' I am not the man.' So I brought him here, sir."



AN ARREST.

Teaching the candidates the way to detain a man accused of theft.

The station officer wrote down this statement carefully and precisely, then turned to the prosecutor and took down his name and address, occupation, and certain details of evidence, together with a full description of the missing wallet and an estimate of its value.

Then he turned to the prisoner and asked his name.

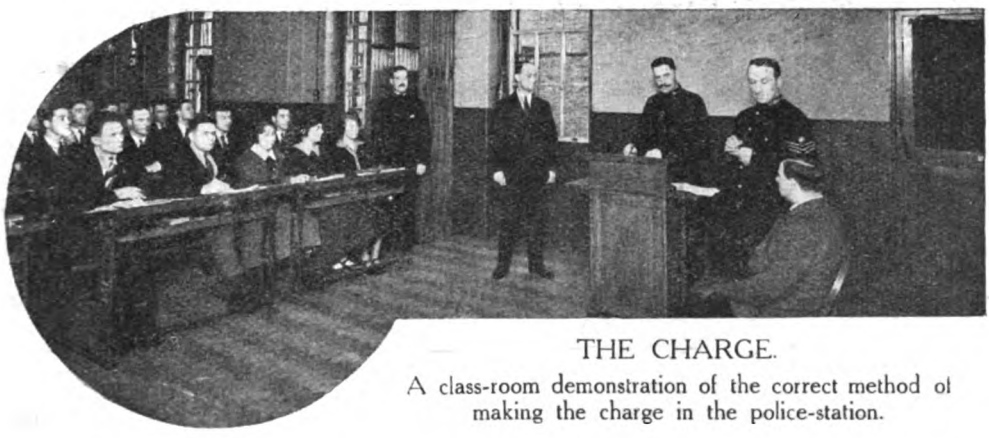
" 'Awkins," said the prisoner, tersely.

" Your Christian name ? "

" Jim—Jim 'Awkins."

" I want your full name, please."

" Lor' lumme ! James Hedward Hawkins," replied the prisoner, surlily, with a deliberate over-emphasis on the aspirates.



THE CHARGE.

A class-room demonstration of the correct method of making the charge in the police-station.

Address ?

" Forty-two, Blank Street, Tooting, just round the corner from——"

" Age ? "

" Thirty-seven—thirty-eight come next Thursday week. I tell you, guv'nor, I don't know nothing about no wallet and——"

"All right, we'll come to that presently," said the inspector, not unkindly.

" Occupation ? "

" Bricklayer."

" Now, you are charged with stealing a wallet from number twenty-seven, High Street, the property of this gentleman. Do you wish to say anything in answer to the charge? You are not obliged to say anything unless you wish to do so, but whatever you say will be taken down in writing and may be given in evidence."

" Well, the wallet was there all right, but I never took it."

The constable and inspector carefully wrote this statement down in their note-books. The recruits, keenly alert to every move, followed their example.

" Search the prisoner," said the station officer.

The constable ordered the prisoner to stand, ran his hands over him, and emptied his pockets, allowing him to see each article extracted and asking him to observe that an accurate inventory was being taken. During this search the prisoner made several grumbling remarks which seemed to amuse the class very considerably, although the sergeant and the inspector showed not the semblance of a smile. The last article which came to light was a brown leather wallet answering to the description of the missing property. This was identified by the prosecutor and duly entered in the inventory with the addition of the words " Found in the right inside coat-pocket." The prisoner was then taken to the cells. End of Scene II.

Scene III. represented the police-court. The superintendent took the part of the magistrate, and before him the whole of the evidence was carefully repeated. At the conclusion of this " trial " the prisoner remained in the " dock " whilst the recruits

THE TRIAL.

A reconstruction of a police-court scene, in which recruits are taught how to give evidence.

were called out one by one to take the place of the constable and give evidence, each man's bearing, mode of address, and accuracy of detail being carefully criticized by the instructor.

Afterwards I made inquiries as to the identity of the man who had played the part of the prisoner so realistically, and was surprised to learn that he was one of the instructors. I believe that he is due to retire from the Force very shortly, so if any theatrical manager happens to be looking for an actor capable of playing an East-end "crook" to the life he knows where to apply. The following day I watched this selfsame man, now dressed in a smart uniform with three silver stripes on his arm, teaching a squad of budding Bobbies how to handle what he described as "difficult customers." Even in these demonstrations he revealed himself as a born actor, with a natural leaning towards comedy.

"Now suppose you are on your beat," he said, strolling along in the approved style. "Remember, two and a half miles an hour is the regulation walking pace on duty. Now imagine you see a man steal something out of a shop. You run after him and catch hold of him. Now you don't want to hurt him and you don't want to hurt yourself. So just remember to try a little tact first. If he won't come quietly then you must use a little skill—and if you don't succeed, then you must decide for yourself whether it's to be the whistle or the truncheon. Personally I prefer the whistle, because a policeman's job is to get his man to the station, not to fight with him. Still, if he knows his business there won't be much struggling. I have arrested hundreds—no, I'm not exaggerating, I said *hundreds*—of hard cases, and I've never damaged a man yet. Why? I'll show you."

He beckoned to a hefty young Scotsman to step out from the class.

"Now you can see that I am a little policeman, but if I had any nonsense from this fellow I could manage him all right. Now then, sonny, kick me—go on, don't be afraid, kick me!"

The recruit attempted to do as he was told, but found himself locked in a grip which rendered him quite helpless.

"This isn't exactly jiu-jitsu, you must understand, but a special system of our own. The police method is to render a man harmless without doing him any harm. I'm not hurting you, chummy, am I?"

"No, sergeant," answered his victim, grinning sheepishly.

"Now if you hold a man like this for any length of time you'll find your arm will ache. But keep cool and calm. If you get excited you'll lose your dignity, and if you get heated you may lose your life. Yes, I know you're surprised; but let me tell you that more than one policeman has lost his life through getting a wet shirt and contracting pneumonia. . . ."

DURING this interesting little lecture the sergeant walked up and down, apparently quite oblivious of the fact that he was dragging his helpless victim with him.

"So if you get tired, change your grip. Like this. Now he's more helpless than ever. Go on, my lad, see if you can hit me or kick me. You're bigger than I am—give me a thump on the ear!"

"Wow!" was all that the recruit replied. In attempting to strike the sergeant he had been thrown off his balance and was lying face downwards on the gymnasium mat in a more helpless position than ever. The onlookers laughed at his expression of dismay.

"Now, if he's a tough case," continued the sergeant, placing his knee upon his prostrate victim, "the thing to remember is, once you get him off his feet never attempt to get him up again. You don't want to weary yourself and your comrades, and you don't want to make a public exhibition by dragging an unwilling man to the station. Send for the ambulance and give him a ride. *But mind you strap him down.* Many a helpless 'drunk' has suddenly come to life whilst riding in the ambulance and slipped off the side before the policemen could say 'Metropolitan Constabulary.'"

At this stage he released his prisoner and turned to me with a twinkle in his eye.

"Next we'll deal with the case of a man who attacks you with a knife. This time you may have to use a little force. Now, sir, if you don't mind my demonstrating on you, I should be much obliged. We've got a very efficient first-aid department here and a most comfortable sick-bay, so if anything should happen——"

I decided that the time had come for me to adjourn for lunch.

In the afternoon I joined another class and proceeded on a conducted tour round a real police-station, which embodied a visit to the cells and a lecture on the treatment of prisoners. The inspector in charge emphasized the importance of remembering that prisoners awaiting trial were assumed innocent until the magistrate had dealt with them.

"Each cell is fitted with an electric bell so that the prisoners' wants may be properly attended to," he said, "and it is the duty of those acting as jailers to answer every

ring. More than one policeman has, in the past, been severely reprimanded by his superiors for neglecting the needs of prisoners. Of course, if you get a very troublesome individual who insists upon ringing the bell without proper cause, there is a switch here which enables the inspector to put the particular line out of action. Then the prisoner can go on ringing to his heart's content without creating the slightest disturbance. But in the ordinary way prisoners are allowed to have newspapers, and are made as comfortable as circumstances permit. Remember always that a policeman is a public servant and that these prisoners, until proved guilty, are members of the public. It may be difficult to show kindness to a man who has kicked you and given one of your comrades a black eye, but it isn't for you to punish him—leave that to the magistrate. The Force has a reputation for absolute fairness and impartiality, and when you fellows become constables you will be expected to maintain it."

SELF-DEFENCE.

An instructor showing one method of holding an unruly prisoner.

How eager are the present-day candidates to assimilate all that is taught them at Peel House may be judged from the fact that voluntary evening classes are held nightly. Here, with a pleasing lack of formality, the men are allowed to select their own subjects for discussion and also to smoke during lectures. It is due in no small measure to the excellent attendances at these classes, combined with the noteworthy atmosphere of disciplined friendliness displayed by the instructors, that it is possible for quite a fair proportion of candidates to pass through the school course as efficient men in the minimum time of nine weeks. And nearly all the candidates, unless they are rejected at an early stage of the training, manage to pass out in the maximum time of sixteen weeks.

Upon leaving Peel House, however, the young man's tuition is not complete. He is sworn in as a police officer and sent to a division, but only as a probationer. Then follows a six months' course in the division coupled with experience under the guidance of a specially selected inspector, and attendance at classes, lectures, and drills arranged by the divisional superintendent. Finally, if he passes two further distinct examinations by a board of independent examiners, and receives from his superintendent a satisfactory report as to his good conduct and adaptability, his appointment is officially confirmed, and he is at last deemed worthy to face the world as a fully-fledged constable.

The Hall of Infamy

By

B. MACDONALD HASTINGS

ILLUSTRATED BY A. GILBERT, R.O.I.

IN the environs of one of those Middle-West cities of America which Englishmen rarely visit there stood for some years a great building which housed a very wonderful collection of wax figures. The owner was a very rich man, and it was his intention to bequeath his "Hall of Fame and Infamy" to the city of his birth. But the city never received the valuable gift. On the millionaire's eightieth birthday the collection was destroyed by fire.

John Festers was the son of an Englishman, but he had been born in the States, and never left them. He had inherited little from his father, but his mother and her forbears had furnished him with a streak of business genius and he became a multi-millionaire. He had married, but had not been blessed with children. When his wax-work collection was burnt he was a widower.

The story of his interest in wax figures, which had led so curiously to what must be regarded as the tragedy of his life, is best told by quoting his own words to Selwyn Bartog, perhaps the most successful private investigator in America.

"When I first became rich, I'll confess to you, Bartog, that I became afflicted with a certain personal vanity. I was always being photographed, and I was always having my portrait painted. Yet I was never satisfied with these counterfeit presentments. I knew myself only as I saw myself in the mirror, and I said that neither camera nor painter told the truth."

"They don't," grinned Bartog. "They tell you a little more than that."

"I remember particularly how I resented caricatures. People would show me sketches of myself in the papers and vow that they were the dead image of me. I could not see the remotest resemblance, and yet if the same artist caricatured a friend of mine I saw the likeness at once. What was the reason?"

"The reason is that we only see ourselves flattened out in mirrors. Our friends see all round us at once."

"Well, I came to a conclusion something like that. And when one day a sculptor offered to do a bust of me, I agreed willingly. But good as the bust is supposed to be, I was not satisfied. It was in bronze, and my head is not made of bronze. It was then that I thought of a coloured wax model."

"You were fond enough of yourself, Mr. Festers."

"And I have been punished for it, Bartog. An Italian street worker, scavenger guy, had, I was told by a friend, a pretty gift for modelling in wax, and I gave him the job. He did first of all a head, and did it with great exactness. At last I knew what I was like, but men, women, and children—and kiddies are particularly good judges—told me that it was a marvellous likeness. Nothing would satisfy me then but that he should model me full-length."

"What was his name?"

"Morani."

"Is he alive?"

"No, Bartog. Thank God he died before this dreadful happening. It would have broken his heart to have seen that fire."

"I see. His models were in your collection."

"His models! Why, ninety per cent. of them were by Morani. But I was about to tell you. He did the full-length of me, and, dressed in my clothes, it was really a very remarkable affair. If a friend, who knew nothing of it, called, I would stand it in

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the hall, and then have the fun of watching him approach it with outstretched hand. Very childish, Bartog, but it amused me—and I had no children. Well, his success with my model tempted me to employ him to do others, particularly of the most distinguished men of this State. No one refused assent, and soon I had a collection which was too big for this house. You can guess the rest. I built a half-million-dollar building in my grounds, called it the 'Hall of Fame,' and kept Morani working all the year round making models not only of my contemporaries, but of all the great figures of American history. Did you ever see the collection, Bartog?"

"I did not. Didn't you exhibit criminals as well, murderers and so forth?"

"Yes. Somehow or other the supply of great men seemed to run short. There is a moral in that, Bartog. I then got the idea of adding a section to be called the Hall of Infamy, and for it Morani modelled every sort of notorious crook who went to the chair. There was one beauty of Carragreen, the Illinois poisoned envelope murderer, sitting in the chair, an exact replica of the one at Sing-Sing."

"Very fascinating, Mr. Festers. Was the show insured?"

"You know that it was, Bartog, and that is why I am enlisting your services."

"Insured for a million dollars, Mr. Festers. That is a lot of money for a bunch of wax figures and a twenty-year-old building that cost originally half that sum."

"That's right. Put to me every thought that must be passing through the public mind. I must bear it. Well, the figure was not excessive because, besides the waxworks, I had a great collection of pictures and relics of great Americans all housed under the same roof. Some of these relics were priceless, and have, of course, no duplicate. The insurance company quite understood that when they gave me the cover."

"You have a catalogue of these relics and pictures?"

"Here it is, Bartog." Bartog took the elegant little vellum-bound book offered him, tapped his mouth with it, and looked away out of the window.

"Don't hurry, Bartog. I'm badly in need of real help."

"You mean because you are conscious of some suspicions of yourself?"

"I cannot help but know. The newspapers are becoming very outspoken. You see, they say that recently I have had very heavy losses on Wall Street. Well, so I have. But I am rich enough to stand much heavier losses than that."

"Quite so." Bartog twisted his grey moustache. "I think I can promise you that the insurance company will pay," he observed.

"Of course they will pay," cried Mr. Festers. "But that does not satisfy me. There will be a cloud over me for the rest of my life, and there's not much left, if I don't find out how this fire occurred."

"Ruins tell nothing," reflected Bartog. "Fire ruins never do. There were two firemen on duty, weren't there? I must see them. And Morani is dead, eh? I must make a point of seeing Morani's tombstone. Good day, Mr. Festers. Don't ask to see me again, please, till to-morrow morning."

Bartog put on his pork-pie hat and took the wheel of his car. He drove it into Mr. Festers' natal city and asked the way to the cemetery.

THAT night, after his investigations, Bartog sat down in a room on the eleventh floor of his hotel and in a code writing which Samuel Pepys would have envied put down the following reflections:—

"There are three possibilities: (1) Festers guilty, (2) an accident, and (3) crime by an unknown person. Festers the probable instigator, if not perpetrator. Why? Because he had repented of the gift of his collection to the State on account of heavy Wall Street losses. He was the only one to visit the collection on the day of the fire. Fire occurred on a Thursday evening, and Thursday was the one day in the week on which Festers excluded the public, keeping the exhibition for himself and his friends. Two firemen obviously suspect Festers. He went into the Hall of Infamy alone and firemen believe that fire broke out in Hall of Infamy.

"But if I prove Festers guilty, I must resign my job, because Festers is paying me to prove him innocent to the world. Festers is no fool, and he does not regard me as a fool. Would he let me loose on the job if he were guilty? Sir, I think not.

"Was the fire the result of an accident? No one who might drop a match visited the place that day save Festers and the two firemen. The two firemen were strictly forbidden to smoke indoors. That is why the one on duty was in the forecourt of the building when the fire broke out. Supposing Festers lit a cigarette while he was in the Hall of Infamy——"

Bartog stopped writing and thought for a moment. He reflected that Festers had not smoked that morning nor had he offered his guest a smoke. Bartog telephoned to Festers.

"Bartog speaking. Do you smoke?"

"I do not. I have never smoked."

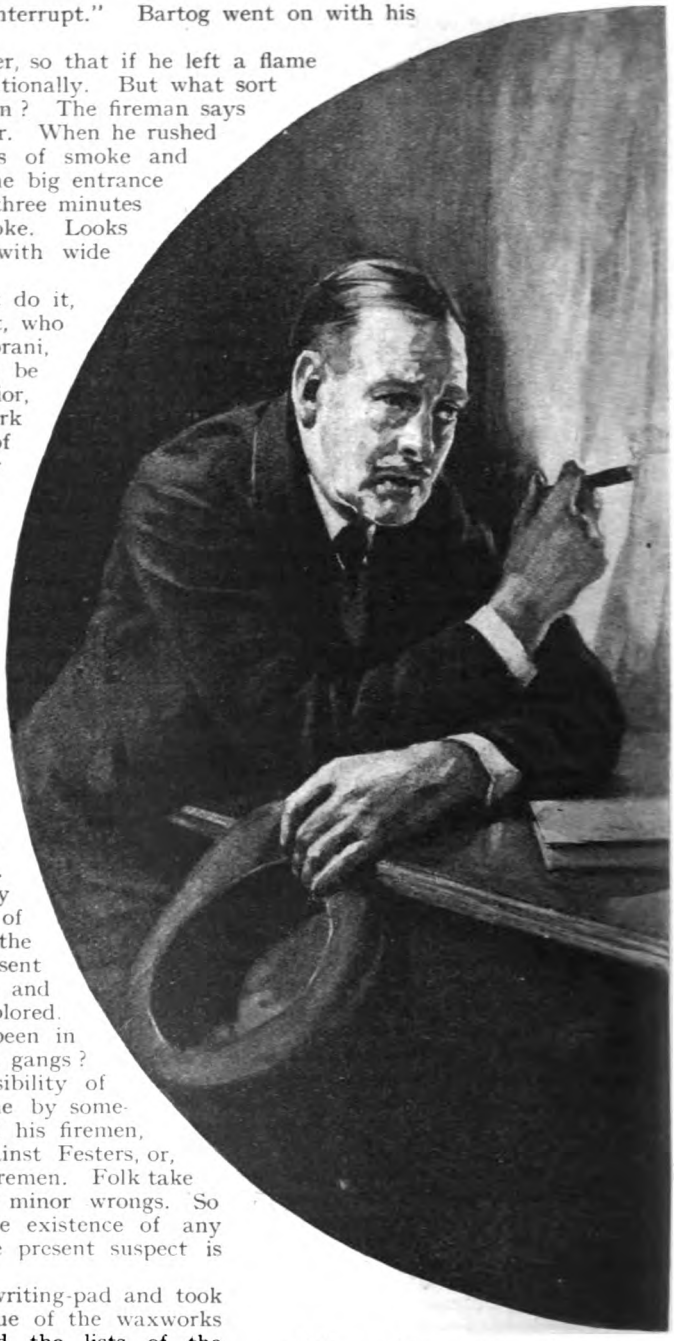
"Thank you. Sorry to interrupt." Bartog went on with his cipher writing.

"Festers was a non-smoker, so that if he left a flame behind him, he did so intentionally. But what sort of a flame could it have been? The fireman says he heard a roar, a sudden roar. When he rushed into the main hall, volumes of smoke and flame were pouring out of the big entrance to the Hall of Infamy. In three minutes nothing could be seen for smoke. Looks like an incendiary bomb, with wide spraying force.

"Well, if Festers did not do it, and it was not an accident, who is the criminal? Not Morani, because I know Morani to be dead. There is Morani junior, who continued his father's work and made the last couple of dozen figures, but the only motive he could have would be the expectation of the job of remaking the whole collection. Well, I've seen the young man and he does not care for wax-modelling. In fact, he is most anxious to return to Italy, and is rather inclined to smile over the whole business of the fire. I gathered that he suspects Festers.

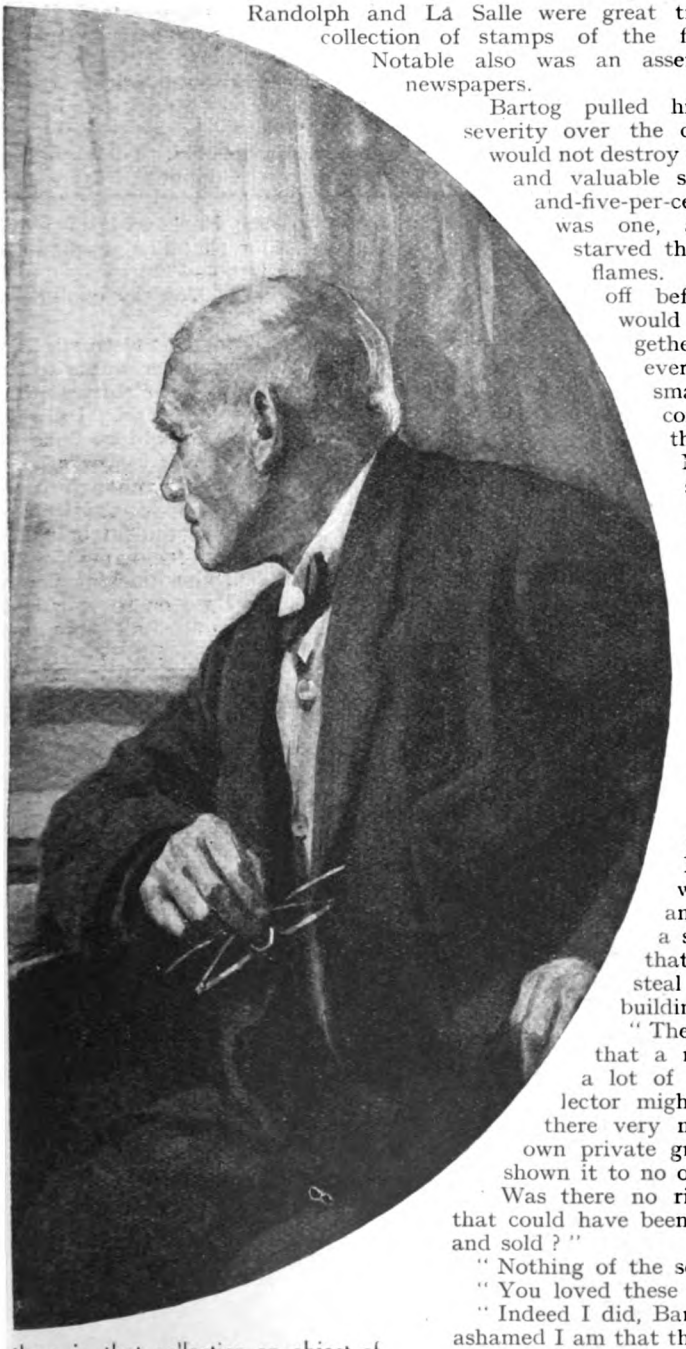
"Of the firemen, one has a complete alibi and both are very disturbed at losing their employment. Quite impossible to think they did it maliciously, but one of them might have been the tool of Festers. Their present finances must be ascertained and their recent movements explored. Supposing I find one has been in touch with one of the bomb gangs?

"There remains the possibility of the thing having been done by someone other than Festers and his firemen, someone with a grudge against Festers, or, indeed, one or both of his firemen. Folk take big revenges sometimes for minor wrongs. So far there is no clue to the existence of any such person. Therefore the present suspect is Festers."



"Now tell me, Mr. Festers, was very great value that would tempt the building down

Bartog pushed away his writing-pad and took from his pocket the catalogue of the waxworks and museum. He skipped the lists of the figures and studied closely those of objects connected with American history. There were links with William Penn and Sir Humphrey Gilbert, even with Sir Walter Raleigh. Here was a charter of the Plymouth Company, fascinating documents about the first establishment of the tobacco industry, a gold chain that belonged to Sir Ferdinando Gorges, and the relic of a wig worn by John Mason. Letters written by Edward



there in that collection an object of a man to steal it, and then burn to hide his theft ? "

Randolph and La Salle were great treasures, and there was a collection of stamps of the first Stamp Duty period. Notable also was an assembly of early American newspapers.

Bartog pulled his moustache with great severity over the catalogue. Surely Festers would not destroy deliberately such fascinating and valuable stuff. He was a hundred-and-five-per-cent. American, if ever there was one, and would sooner have starved than give such things to the flames. Perhaps he carried them off before the fire. But that would be too risky a game altogether. It was possible, however, that some pet object, small and easily carried and concealed, was salved before the dreadful deed was done. Now if Bartog could find such an object in Festers' possession, what would duty dictate ?

ON the following morning Bartog sat once more in the society of Mr. Festers. This time he asked for a cigar and was given one.

" I keep these for my friends, you see," observed Mr. Festers.

" Just so, sir. Just as you seem to have kept that collection for your friends. Now tell me, Mr. Festers, was there in that collection an object of very great value, a small, easily portable object, that would tempt a man to steal it, and then burn the building down to hide his theft ? "

" There was no object, Bartog, that a man could sell secretly for a lot of money. Of course, a collector might have coveted something there very much and taken it for his own private gratification. He could have shown it to no one else."

" Was there no rich jewel, no object of art that could have been altered, faked, if you like, and sold ? "

" Nothing of the sort."

" You loved these relics, Mr. Festers ? "

" Indeed I did, Bartog, and I cannot say how ashamed I am that they are lost to our country."

" If the newspaper suspicions are correct, you might have been tempted to save some pet item, eh ? "

" For the love of God, what do you mean ? "

" Mr. Festers, I'm trying to help you. Is there anything in this house that was ever in the museum ? "

" There is I have constantly subtracted as well as added. But you'll find nothing

valuable in my safes, alas! Every great treasure has been destroyed."

Bartog was impressed with the sincerity of his employer's tone. He saw that he would be allowed to search if he liked, but he reflected that he was no judge in any case of the value of what might be but a faded sheet of paper, and that to convict Festers was hardly what he was being paid for. Let the insurance company sleuths do their own work.

"Is this catalogue up-to-date?" now asked Bartog.

"Yes. There may be a few of the recent waxworks omitted. Let me look. Yes. Young Morani finished a very convincing one of Governor George Martin the other day. That is not here."

"Any others?"

"Really, I can't be certain. But Morani will be able to tell you. Take that catalogue to him and get him to add the latest models."

Bartog drove his car once more to Morani's workshop. He found a great crowd. The workshop had been burnt down in the night.

LESS than three hours later Bartog joined Mr. Festers. The octogenarian was almost in a state of collapse.

"You have heard of Morani's fire? Really, this is too dreadful. Are we being hunted by a gang? Will my house go next?"

"Don't fret, Mr. Festers. The trouble is over and I've got the criminal."

"You've got him!"

"Sure thing. And I'd have been a dull dog if I hadn't after that fire at Morani's. You see, Mr. Festers——"

"But the criminal! You say you've got him? Where is he?"

"In the next room. Don't worry. He won't run. In fact, he rather wants to see you. Now, let me tell you the story so that you know how to face your man. I always had an idea that the job might be done by someone who disliked your waxworks. Believe me, there are folks crazy enough to get wild because your figure of Christopher Columbus is too short or too fat or something. But it would be a fool game looking for such a person, and you knowing you're only guessing. Then I got on to your Hall of Infamy, with the figures of all those guys

that went to the chair. Now a relative of a murderer might not like your exhibiting him like that."

"Bartog, I never dreamt of such a thing."

"I did, and woke up and made notes about it. Well, I long-distanced the police headquarters and got information about all recent murderers in your catalogue. Some had relatives that might have done it, but it seemed to me they'd waited a bit too long to be very probable. Then I found out from you that there was a murderer or two in the collection whose name was not in the catalogue. I go to Morani for details. I find his place burnt down. Why? Morani is hysterical, but I get out of him at last that he had done two figures not in the catalogue. Now one of those figures, though finished, was in his workshop at the time of both fires. Man name of Gaffneys."

"Gaffneys! Why, that's our own murderer. Did it in this very city. Lot of people took his side and tried to save him."

"I read about it, Mr. Festers. I made tracks for the Gaffneys' home, and very soon I made a capture. I think you're ready now to see the criminal."

Bartog left the room and returned with a boy, a stripling of perhaps sixteen years of age.

Mr. Festers gasped. "This—this boy!"

"Ye-ah. I did it," nodded the lad surlily. "You put my pop in the Hall of Infamy. My pop was a good man, and my mother knows it, and my brothers and sisters knows it. My pop did a murder, but he was drove to it by a beast, and I won't have my pop shoved up as a show with a lot of scum. Jim Gaffneys was a white man. And I'm the new Jim Gaffneys, see? And I got into your show through a window and left a bomb I got from a pal in the Riverside bomb gang. And then yesterday morning my brother Joe pipes the figure of pop still in Morani's workshop, and I know I ain't finished my job. So I did Morani's place in with petrol, and you can kill me if you like, but I'm glad I done it."

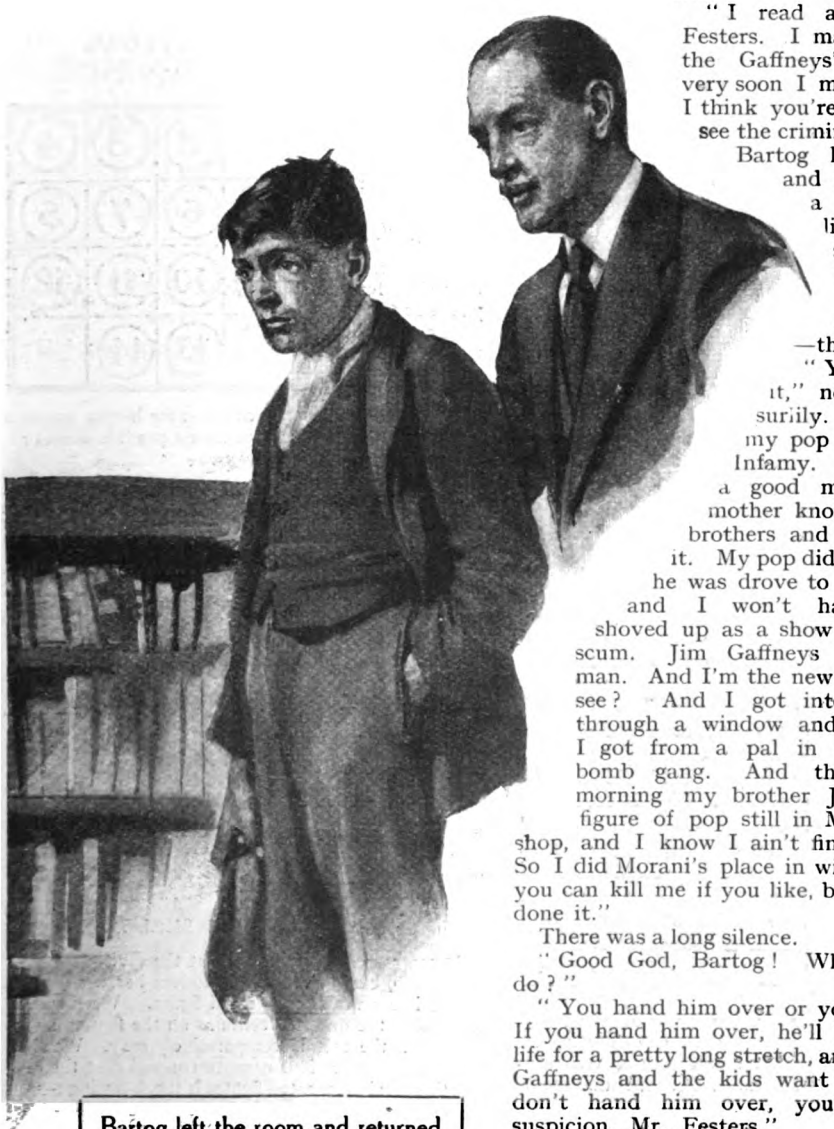
There was a long silence.

"Good God, Bartog! What are we to do?"

"You hand him over or you keep quiet. If you hand him over, he'll be put out of life for a pretty long stretch, and maybe Mrs. Gaffneys and the kids want him. If you don't hand him over, you'll die under suspicion, Mr. Festers."

Again a long silence.

"Bartog, I'll keep quiet. Tell him to go home."



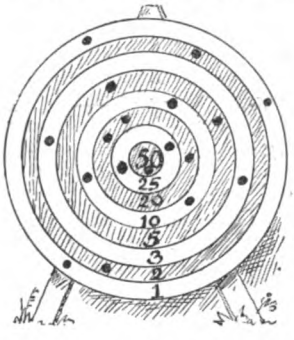
Bartog left the room and returned with a boy, a stripling of perhaps sixteen years of age.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

828.—ANOTHER TARGET PUZZLE.

HERE is an interesting target puzzle that is quite different from the one I gave last June. Three marksmen have been firing at this target, which was hit on every shot. It will thus be seen that the number of hits has been eighteen, so each competitor must have fired six times. As the result was a tie, each having scored 71 points, it is an amusing puzzle to pick out the six counts that must have been made by each marksman. Thus we could call the three men A, B, and C.

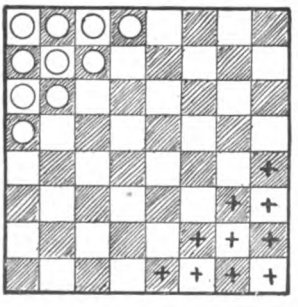


829.—CURIOUS SQUARE NUMBERS.

THE square of 31, which is 961, has this peculiarity, that if you divide it by 9 you get 106 with remainder 7, where the sum of the digits in both cases happens to be 7. Can you find the next two smallest square numbers which when divided by 9 will give a similar result—that is the remainder 7 and the sum of the digits in the quotient also 7?

830.—MOVING COUNTER PUZZLE.

A CORRESPONDENT sends me this puzzle. Place ten counters on the squares of a chessboard, as shown in the diagram. He wants to transfer them all to the other corner as indicated by the ten crosses. A counter may jump over any counter to the next square beyond, if vacant, either horizontally or vertically, but not diagonally, and there are no captures, and no simple moves; only leaps.



He and his friends have made long attempts to do this, but have utterly failed, and he wants to know whether it is possible, and, if so, how it is to be done. I will give a very conclusive answer next month. Meanwhile the reader may like to try his hand at it.

831.—MISSING WORD PUZZLE.

IN every line the two blanks contain the same word without any change whatever in the spelling.

(1) The —— of Fingal's Cave would —— the visitor.

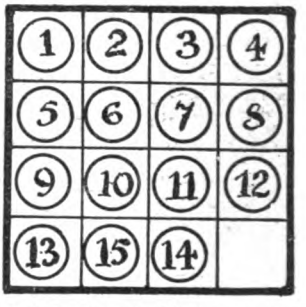
(2) The Arabs sometimes —— travellers in the ——.

(3) A selection of —— sometimes —— a writer to annoyance.

(4) To excuse making a donation, many will —— to the ——.

832.—MAGIC FIFTEEN PUZZLE.

STARTING from this position, which is the original position in Loyd's 14–15 puzzle, and which we know to be impossible of solution under his conditions, the puzzle now is to move the blocks, one by one, until they shall form a perfect magic square in which the four columns and two diagonals add up to thirty.



I have here substituted counters for blocks, as more convenient. What are your fewest possible moves?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

824.—DIGITAL PUZZLE.

THE numbers are 512, 392, and 648, and also all three-figure numbers of the form $81n+162$, viz: 162, 243, 324, 405, 567, 648, 729, 810, 891, 972. I do not think I have dropped any cases, and, if not, these are all that exist.

825.—SUBSCRIPTION PUZZLE.

THE man subscribed £13 10s. Add this to the £60 from the other six men and we get £73 10s. The average is therefore a seventh of this—£10 10s. So that the seventh man subscribed £3 more than this average, as stated.

826.—AN ABSOLUTE SKELETON.

IT can soon be discovered that the divisor must be 312, that 9 cannot be in the quotient because 9 times the divisor contains a repeated figure. We therefore know that the quotient contains all the figures 1 to 8 once, and the rest is comparatively easy. We shall find that there are four cases to try, and that the only one that avoids repeated figures is the following:—

312)101146266oo(32418675

827.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

THE word is: TO-MORROW.

The Strand Magazine

CONTENTS FOR DECEMBER, 1926.

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Frontispiece: "I say!" thought Miss Sutton, following next. "That's a good line, if you like. And isn't that a lovely sort of haggard look that new face-powder has given me!"

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The characters and names in the stories in "The Strand Magazine" are entirely imaginary and have no reference to real persons.

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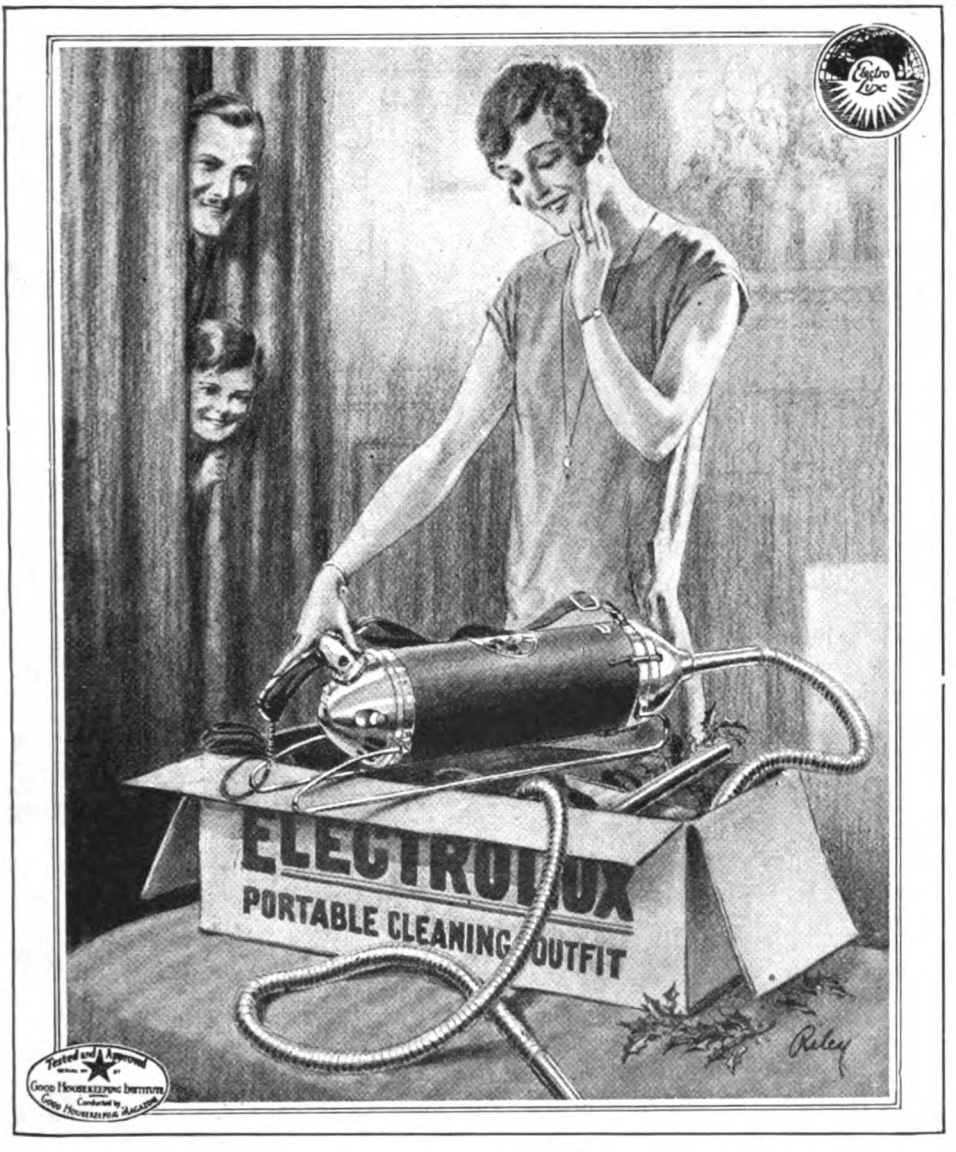

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THE

CHRISTMAS NUMBER

of

The STRAND MAGAZINE

December
1926

Whereas the glass that you see on entering is ever so slightly concave and ever so slightly tinged with green—

—that which you face on leaving is ever so slightly convex and ever, ever so slightly pink.

See "The Two Mirrors," by Denis Mackail, on page 529.

"I SAY!" THOUGHT MISS SUTTON, FOLLOWING NEXT. "THAT'S A GOOD LINE, IF YOU LIKE. AND ISN'T THAT A LOVELY SORT OF HAGGARD LOOK THAT NEW FACE-POWDER HAS GIVEN ME!"

(See page 537.)

THE TWO MIRRORS

By

DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by FRED PURVIS

WHEN people, roughly and readily, add the name of the Café Angelo at Ixe to the list of places where if you wait long enough you will see everyone in the world, they are, of course, exaggerating just as much as in the more familiar instance of the Café de la Paix. Very few Eskimos, South Sea Islanders, or bedridden centenarians from New Brighton are to be met with at either spot. African Pygmies, Hairy Ainus, and wicket-keepers from the first eleven at Broadmoor are, on the whole, equally conspicuous by their absence. One can readily imagine more profitable places in which to hang about in the hope of beholding the Grand Lama of Tibet.

Still, one quite understands what the exaggeration implies. Almost everyone goes, sooner or later, to the Riviera; and having arrived there, almost everyone goes, sooner

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or later, to Ixe. And once anyone has got as far as Ixe, there is absolutely nothing to do but to have luncheon at the Café Angelo.

Because no one, you see, ever stays at Ixe. Not that it isn't beautifully situated or easily to be reached by car from any of the places where people do stay. But Providence seems to have decided that though mammoth hotels shall jostle each other along the whole of the rest of the coast, Ixe shall remain simply a place to which people drive over for luncheon.

"What shall we do to-day?" the people ask—for it is one of the tiresome features of the Riviera that this question crops up there just as much as it does at home.

"I know," says somebody else—for, thank Heaven, the question is generally answered. "Let's go over and have lunch at Ixe."

So we all get into the big car, and we rush along the dusty, winding, precipitous roads, missing quantities of other big cars by hair-breadths; and presently we drop down a perfectly horrible hill into Ixe, and as there are a lot of still further big cars parked outside the Café Angelo, we naturally park our big car there too.

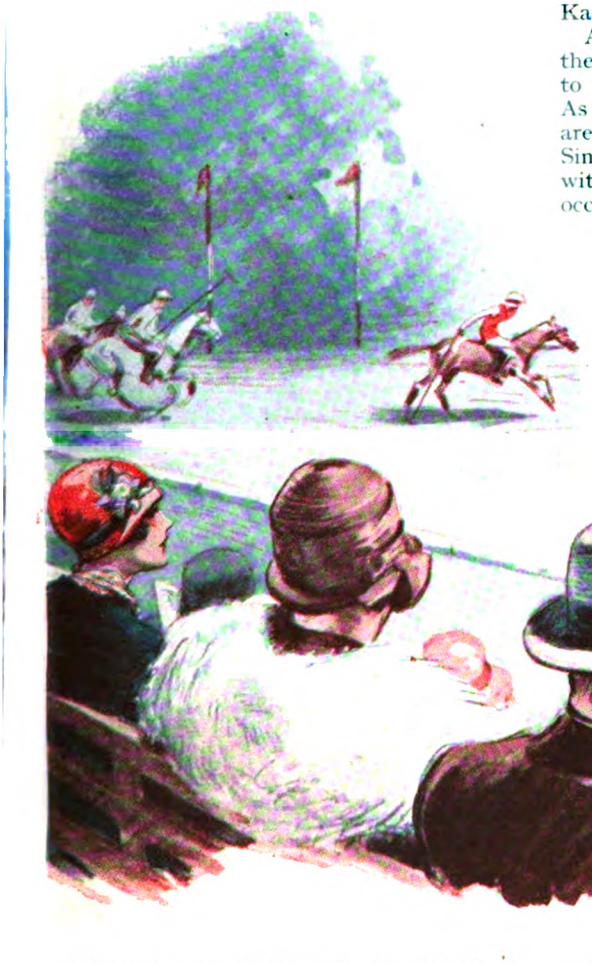
As we extricate ourselves from the revolving doors, we are received by a smiling and swarthy gentleman in a frock-coat, whom some of us will feel inspired to address as "Monsieur Angelo," while others—hoping thereby to show that they have been here before—call him "Angelo" pure and simple. As a matter of fact, his real name is Kaufmann; but the point is quite immaterial. We want his food, and he wants our money, and a restaurateur by any other name will smile just as sweetly.

The exchange is effected—prodigally on both sides, though with the balance distinctly in favour of M. Kaufmann. But unless we are a particularly dull and insensitive party, we shall notice, as we stagger back into the big car, that we are all looking a little thoughtful. The women, who had seemed so gay and cheerful during the meal, suddenly fall into a silence—from which they presently emerge to begin discussing such depressing subjects as electric baths, vibro-massage, and even elastic underwear. If there are any middle-aged men present, they will—after a similar silence—be heard airing their views on precisely the same topics. The young men, however, who had appeared slightly below par during the actual luncheon, suddenly throw out their chests and declare that here on the

"My Gosh, that's the girl I'm going to marry," said Chunks to himself, his gaze fixed on the back of Miss Sutton's neck.

shores of the Mediterranean no one could help keeping fit.

"Baths?" they say. "Massage? Nonsense! All one wants is good food and plenty of it. Why, I felt rotten before lunch, and look at me now."



What does it all mean? Has M. Kaufmann infused some magic ingredient into his Lucullan feast that has produced these strange after-effects? Is the Café Angelo haunted by some spirit of hypochondria or faith-healing that plays these odd tricks with visitors according to their age and sex? Can the mere size of the bill cause some to believe that they have eaten to excess, and others that, however much they have eaten, it was exactly what they wanted?

No, no; the explanation is much simpler than that. M. Kaufmann is no alchemist, his establishment contains no ghosts, and his bills are neither more nor less exorbitant than the general run of bills on this sky-blue coast. The plain, straightforward cause of it all is to be found on the two sides of that fixed screen just beyond the main door of the restaurant proper; that fixed screen one end of which so modestly masks the lower limbs of the three young ladies who sit jammed together behind a high desk, endlessly setting down and casting up M. Kaufmann's accounts.

As you pass in through the main door of the restaurant proper, you are brought face to face with one side of this fixed screen. As you go out again, some hours later, you are brought face to face with the other. Since both its surfaces are entirely covered with looking-glass, you are also on each occasion offered a full-length image of your own person; but—and this is where we approach the clue to the psychological riddle—whereas the glass that you see on entering is ever so slightly concave and ever so slightly tinged with green, that which you face on leaving is ever so slightly convex and ever, ever so slightly pink.

Understand, please, that in neither case is there anything to be compared with the distortion that provokes your merriment in the Hall of a Thousand Giggles at an Amusement Park. By all ordinary tests both sides of that fixed screen are completely flat, and the difference in tint is a mere *nuance* or suggestion in the chemical synthesis of the glass. It is a pure accident that this subtle distinction exists, and the decorators of the Café Angelo may be wholly absolved from any charge of mockery or disrespect towards its patrons. There is no evidence that even M. Kaufmann is aware of it. Or if he noticed it when he first came here, then familiarity must long ago have driven it out of his memory.

But there, for all that, the distinction is. And just as people entering the restaurant see themselves looking a little thinner, paler, and more interesting than they really are, so people leaving it see themselves as just a little stouter, pinker, and more full-blooded than they are seen by their friends. All

women and most men over a certain age infinitely prefer the first of these two versions—which is why they chatter so cheerfully over their luncheon, and why they lapse into that worried silence when they behold the second. But the young men, whose spirits have drooped so while eating and drinking, find much encouragement in the broad-shouldered, almost florid reflections that they see as they pass out again. Their silence is that of restored self-confidence. Besides, men with figures like that have something better to do than to talk.

CHUNKS RIVERS first met Angela Sutton at a polo-match in the south-western outskirts of London. It was not a sport in which he took any violent interest, but it was a match which the Press had decided to boom—for the usual reason that a team of Englishmen was quite obviously going to be defeated by a team of foreigners, which apparently possesses about fifty times the news-value of any contest whose result is more open to doubt.

And for some cause which the Press presumably understands, but which we certainly don't, the effect of this was that everybody in London started queueing up so as to take tickets for their country's public humiliation, and saying: "Are you going to the match on Saturday?" and looking pained, surprised, and contemptuous if you said you weren't.

So Chunks Rivers's sister-in-law, who always went everywhere, took two tickets; and as at the last moment her husband, who was Chunks's brother, said: "Oh, did you mean *this* Saturday? I'm awfully sorry, but I've fixed up to play golf," she rang up Chunks and told him that he'd got to take her instead.

Chunks had also fixed up to play golf, but as he was only a brother-in-law he had to do what he was told.

"All right," he said, with resignation. "Delighted."

"And you can drive me down in your car," said his sister-in-law. "Because Tremlett always expects his Saturday afternoons off."

"Right you are," said Chunks, who had been born and bred in rich enough circles to know that chauffeurs always come first. "Perhaps you can give me a bite of lunch?"

"I can't do that," said his sister-in-law, "because we've got a dinner-party the night before."

So Chunks quite understood that too, and he provided the lunch himself—which, after all, he could well afford—and then he drove his sister-in-law down to the south-western outskirts of London, and paid rather more than the double first-class return-fare for the privilege of parking his Brecknock Six in a bottle-necked sun-trap freely sprinkled with sharp flints. And when he had done this, he proceeded towards a very hard seat in Block J, and, having forced his way into it, was immediately ordered to force his way out again for the purpose of hiring two small leatherette pads from the Kumfy Kushion Company—who, however, had only one small leatherette pad left, so that Chunks Rivers found himself in considerable torment long before the downfall of England began.

And when it did begin, he couldn't see anything because the rather stout woman in front had put up her parasol.

"Tell her to put it down, then," said Chunks's sister-in-law, when he complained of this in the first of the many and incessant intervals.

"Oh, no," said Chunks, who was a shy young man. "I couldn't possibly do that. I can see beautifully."

"But you just told me you couldn't."

"Yes, I know. But——"

"Oh, very well, then," interrupted Chunks's sister-in-law. "If you're afraid to, I'll ask her myself."

So she leant forward and tapped the woman's shoulder, and the woman looked round with just that expression of frozen self-righteousness and supercilious venom which is commonly employed by her sex on occasions like this. Only then, instead of looking back again and pretending to be stone-deaf—which should have been the normal procedure—she gasped, and smiled, and exclaimed:—

"Oh, Mrs. Rivers! Fancy meeting you here!"

"Let me introduce my brother-in-law," said Mrs. Rivers, with great presence of mind. "Chunks, this is Mrs. Sutton."

"Delighted," said Chunks.

"My husband," said Mrs. Sutton, indicating the red-faced, middle-aged man on her right. "My daughter," she added, indicating the girl on her left. "Angela—this is Mrs. Rivers, and her brother-in-law."

She then hurriedly lowered the parasol—which we may accept as clear proof of a guilty conscience—and Chunks said to himself: "My Gosh, that's the girl I'm going to marry."

Since he was a shy young man and no sheikh, he immediately qualified this prophecy by adding: "That's to say, if only I can get her to see it." But his intention remained fixed from that moment, as did his passionate gaze on the back of Miss Sutton's neck. He would scarcely have noticed it if her mother had hoisted the parasol again.

So the game of polo went on in a manner which might be described as all ding and no dong, until a point in the final chukker when the people in the front row suddenly shrieked and snatched their feet off the ground, which they did because three ponies and their riders all fell over the touch-line

They sat down for a bit, and Chunks Rivers goggled at her profile, and touched the edge of her dress when he thought she wasn't looking.

(or whatever it is called) in a shower of arms, legs, hoofs, mallets, and international expletives.

Having nothing morbid in his composition, and being fully aware that from his place in the seventh row he could do little or nothing to assist in this *contretemps*, Chunks Rivers instantly closed both his eyes. And even as he did so, he heard the girl in front of him exclaim in a loud, clear tone :—

"Oh, how lovely!"

If he had not already lost his soul to her, he might have found it in him to criticize this apparent bloodthirstiness—even though the three ponies and their riders all sorted themselves out and stood up again and went on playing as if nothing particular had occurred to interrupt them. If he had merely been trembling on the brink, as it were, this exclamation might well have drawn him abruptly back to the heart-whole condition in which he had entered Block J. But in the actual circumstances, its only effect was to suggest the lines on which Miss Sutton must be wooed and might be won.

Clearly she was one of those girls who enjoyed steeplechases and Rugby football matches and street accidents and all that sort of thing. Very well, then. The fact that such a girl had, an hour ago, been the very last kind of girl that he cared about made no shadow of difference to Chunks Rivers, from the left-hand upper pocket of whose well-cut waistcoat the butt-end of Cupid's dart was still almost visibly projecting. Where other young women were concerned, his prejudices remained wholly unaffected, but no amount of incompatibility of temperament should stand between

him and Miss Angela Sutton. He didn't actually propose to break his own collar-bone for her amusement, but if she wanted to see other fellows' collar-bones being broken, then he was entirely at her service. It was a pity that the Grand National was still nine months away, but fellows often got knocked out by some of these fast bowlers, and dashed to pieces at Brooklands, and seized with cramp at swimming-races. He'd take her to any and all of these scenes of possible disaster, if only she'd come with him. And if she wouldn't come with him—well, at any rate he knew what to talk about now so as to make himself popular.

He hurriedly plunged his head between his knees, in accordance with the advice of his family physician.

And if this wasn't devotion from a young man who habitually turned green when he cut his own finger, and had once fainted when his neighbour at a dinner-party had given a witty description of an operation that she had recently undergone, then one would like to know what is.

On these lines, accordingly, did Chunks Rivers lay patient siege to the heart of Angela Sutton. He moved slowly at first, for he still believed her to be feminine enough to be alarmed by any sudden declaration of his feelings. But he moved with infinite cunning. There were very few more dances left that season, but he turned out for all of them, dashing swiftly from house to house until he saw the object of his affections, and always taking care to provide himself beforehand with some bloodcurdling incident which he had read in his newspaper, or overheard at his club, or —in the last resort—had evolved from his own imagination.

"I say, Miss Sutton—may I have a dance?"

"Oh, thanks awfully. Missing six?"

"Missing six. Delighted."

And then, after an interval generally spent in walking up and down in the street:—

"I say, Miss Sutton—this is ours, isn't it?"

"Is it?"

"Oh, rather. I mean to say——"

"Oh, well; I expect you're right."

What joy to glide away, as other baffled mathematicians hurried forward to submit their own calculations. What depths of despair when these calculations were—as sometimes happened—preferred to his own. But Chunks Rivers generally got his dance in sooner or later, and the instant that he had discovered—by watching the other people's feet—whether it were a waltz or a fox-trot, he renewed his peculiar form of attack.

"I say, Miss Sutton, I saw an awfully amusing thing to-day. A taxi ran into a horse-van just outside my flat, and the wheel came off and the fellow fell right on his head. Bled like an absolute pig, you know."

"Oh?" said Miss Sutton.

"Rather," said Chunks Rivers. "And what's more, they had to shoot the jolly old horse. Ha, ha!"

He watched her face anxiously. It was only by reciting this wholly untruthful adventure without any thought of its meaning that he had avoided turning green and very possibly fainting in her arms. But as he still looked in vain for a glance of interest or gratitude, it struck him that perhaps she required even more lifelike and convincing detail.

He took a deep breath, and reflected that he could probably always get a glass of brandy in the supper-room.

"It bled——" he began again.

"I'm stifling in here," interrupted Miss Sutton. "Do you mind if we sit down for a bit?"

"What? Oh, rather. Delighted."

So they sat down for a bit, and Chunks Rivers goggled at her profile, and touched the edge of her dress when he thought she wasn't looking, and presently he said:—

"I say—could you—I mean to say, I was wondering if—that's to say, could you possibly come up to Lord's with me to-morrow? If you see what I mean?"

He blinked agitatedly while Miss Sutton seemed to consider this invitation, and then she answered: "Do you mean mother as well?"

"Oh, rather," said Chunks, lying again with great heartiness. And to make a job of it, he added: "Perhaps your father'd care to come too?"

So then, of course, he had to chase all round London to raise the extra tickets, but he did it in the end, and there he sat—all in a row with the three Suttons—and presently, as luck would have it, a fast bowler sent down a diabolical delivery which rose up and hit the nearer batsman on the short ribs, and he went over like a sack of potatoes and lay there flat on his back.

Mrs. Sutton shrieked, and Mr. Sutton said: "Heh? What's that? I wasn't looking," and Chunks shut his eyes quickly and forced them open again, and turning to Angela he remarked: "Ha, ha! That was a jolly good smack, that was"—at the same time crossing his thumbs through some confused and superstitious notion that this action might explain to the Recording Angel that he didn't really mean anything of the sort.

Again he waited anxiously for his reward, but it didn't seem to be forthcoming.

"You wouldn't like it if it had happened to you," said Miss Sutton, a little coldly.

"That's true," said Chunks. And then, correcting himself: "I mean to say, oh wouldn't I just?"

"Don't be ridiculous!" said Miss Sutton.

"I'm not," cried Chunks. "Why, the time I broke my leg——"

Here, to his embarrassment and horror, the whole of the cricket-field began turning dark and rocking about as if poised on an unsteady pivot. Leaving the story of his broken leg unfinished—which may have been just as well, seeing that it had happened when he was three, and he had no recollection of it whatsoever—he hurriedly plunged his head between his knees, in accordance with the advice of his family physician.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Miss Sutton. "What are you looking for?"

"It's all right," answered a muffled voice. "Dropped my match-card."

"No, you haven't," said Miss Sutton. "You gave it to me. Mr. Rivers—are you ill?"

"No, no," said the muffled voice. "Not quite—— Shoelace, I mean. I——"

And at this point, most fortunately, the stricken batsman suddenly rolled over and stood up again, and everybody clapped and cheered; and by the time they had finished Chunks had also recovered, and was sitting erect once more and hardly looking green at all.

BUT he couldn't really feel, as he sat alone in his flat that night, that he was making any real or particular progress. One might call it encouraging to have danced with her as often as he had; one might call it encouraging to have taken her to Lord's; but though she had always seemed glad to see him at each fresh meeting, he had been left after each fresh separation with an indefinable sense that somehow he hadn't quite come up to her expectations.

Could it be, then, that she had discovered in some way that his interest in slipped kneecaps and twisted ligaments was only assumed? Or must he go even farther? Must he give up golf and take to some more

active and dangerous form of sport in his own person? If he appeared before her with his biceps bulging through his sleeves, with a few teeth missing and a broken nose, would she accept these tributes in the spirit in which they would be offered? More important still, would such a battered and swollen exterior give him the self-confidence which he still needed before he could so much as pay her an open compliment?

He rose from his arm-chair, strolled into his bathroom, and examined himself in the looking-glass—left there by a previous tenant—on the back of the door. Well, he was plain, if you liked, but not repulsive. His skin was clear and healthy, his muscles—here he stroked his right arm with his left hand—quite sufficiently developed for all ordinary purposes. On a sudden impulse he swung over, with stiffened legs, and placed his finger-tips on the bows of his pumps. Stood up again, and held a chair at arm's length while he counted a hundred.

No; decidedly one couldn't call him flabby. But, alas, one could hardly fail to call him thin. It seemed beyond all hope that any amount of extra muscle piled on this inadequate framework could ever give him that look of hefty, four-square beefiness which, he was convinced, represented Miss Sutton's ideal. It was true that men sometimes thickened in the most surprising way when they got into the early forties; but if he were to wait another fifteen years in his present state of mind, he would be much more likely to pine away to nothing at all.

HE retired to rest in a condition of marked depression; and the next evening—though he went to no fewer than five dances as fast as he could—his depression became even more acute when he failed to discover Miss Angela Sutton at any of them. At the fifth and final one, however, he met his sister-in-law, and she said, "Hullo, Chunks! I thought you'd be in Scotland."

"In Scockotland?" stammered Chunks Rivers. "Why?"

"Because," said his sister-in-law, with the brutal directness of all young and happily-married women, "the Suttons went off there this morning. Didn't you know?"

"Oh, Lord!" said Chunks, miserably. "I say—when are they coming back?"

"About October," said his sister-in-law. "Aren't you going to ask me to dance?"

"Oh!" said Chunks. "Yes. Delighted."

"Idiot," said his sister-in-law. "I'm just going home."

She then flourished her large feather fan just under his nose, and left him—a prey to despair as black and very nearly as pointless as the two buttons on the back of his dress-coat.

We say "pointless" because, after all, it was in the very nature of things that the Suttons should go to Scotland at the end of July; but we say "black" because—though we haven't mentioned it previously—Chunks Rivers had a desk in the family business. And as he was the youngest of all the Riverses, it followed that he took his summer holiday only when the older and married Riverses had quite finished taking theirs—which in the ordinary way was round about Christmas.

Out of consideration for your feelings, therefore, we pass lightly over the next four or five months in his life, merely stating that he continued to dream of Miss Angela Sutton all night and most of the day, that he contrived to write to her once or twice—and always in a hearty, callous, and jolly-good-fellow sort of way (with a few good stories of mud and blood) which gave her no hint of the depth and tenderness of his passion; and that three times every week he went, stealthily and by appointment, to Captain Hector's establishment in a turning off Bond Street, where, in exchange for a large number of guineas, he was initiated into the mysteries of Captain Hector's System for Restoring that Glorious Feeling of Youth—but without any observable effect on his physique or figure.

In November his sister-in-law happened casually to mention that the Suttons were on a visit to some friends in America, and in December she very kindly invited him to spend his annual holiday at her house in the country.

"Thanks awfully," said Chunks. "Delighted."

"Unless," added his sister-in-law, "you were thinking of going to the Riviera."

"What on earth for?" asked Chunks.

"Well," said his sister-in-law, "you'd probably meet a lot of people you know out there, at this time of year. The Chevingtons, I mean, and the Butleys, and the Thriplows, and—oh, yes—and the Suttons."

"And the which?"

"The Suttons. You know, Chunks; with that girl who's just had such a success in New York."

"Where-are-they-staying?" snapped Chunks, practically in one syllable.

So his sister-in-law laughed, and told him, and he rushed out and stood in a queue at a Travel Bureau, and the Travel Bureau said that the Blue Train was booked up till the end of April; and he rushed off again and stood in another queue, and bought a passport; and in a third queue, and bought an International Travelling Pass for the Brecknock Six; and in a fourth queue,

and bought something called a Tryptique; and in a fifth queue, and bought an oval nationality plate; and in a sixth queue, and bought some space on the Channel steamer. And on the eighth of January—not sooner, because one of the other Riverses had suddenly decided to have influenza—he landed at Boulogne, and drove some six hundred miles and more at a furious pace, stopping only for meals, and so reached the sky-blue coast early on the morning of the tenth, and fell fast asleep in the Suttons' hotel with his clothes on, and woke up about seven in the evening, and had a bath, and dressed, and came downstairs into the restaurant, and went up to the Suttons' table and said: "Hullo! Fancy meeting you here!"

THERE followed a week in which he stuck to the Sutton family like a fly-paper, and gazed dolefully at Miss Angela Sutton like a stuffed owl. And he entertained Miss Angela Sutton with innumerable stories of the accidents that he had seen on the road from Boulogne, and said that he was awfully keen on pigeon-shooting, and wouldn't it be fun if they all nipped over into Spain and saw a bull-fight?

And sometimes he thought he was making headway, though oftener he thought that he wasn't. And sometimes he felt that Miss Sutton was looking at him in an odd kind of way that might mean something, though oftener he was afraid that it was just that she had such large eyes. And finally the morning came when the red-faced Mr. Sutton said, "What on earth shall we do to-day?" and the rather stout Mrs. Sutton said, "I know. Let's go over and have lunch at Ixe," and Chunks—hardly waiting for her to finish—said, "By Jove, yes; and I'll drive you there."

So he tore off and got his car out, and off they all set. They rushed along the dusty, winding, precipitous roads, missing quantities of other cars by hairbreadths; and presently they dropped down that perfectly horrible hill into Ixe, and as there were a lot of still further cars parked outside the Café Angelo, Chunks Rivers parked his car there too.

"This looks the place," he said. "Come on, Mrs. Sutton."

And there, inside the revolving doors, was M. Kaufmann—whom Mr. Sutton instantly greeted as M. Angelo, but who smiled hospitably all the same and said yes, there was a nice table for four, and the season was very amusing this year, wasn't it?

And then, of course, the whole party were brought face to face with the first of the two mirrors on that fixed screen; the mirror which, as you may remember, was ever so slightly concave and ever so slightly tinged with green.

"Aha!" thought Mr. Sutton, who passed it first. "I'll have to have some of my suits taken in when I get back to London. By George, I shouldn't wonder if I hadn't lost the best part of a stone since I've been here. And such a healthy colour, too! I swear I don't look a day over thirty-five."

And he went forward, highly pleased with himself.

"Good gracious!" thought Mrs. Sutton in turn. "That diet I've been on all this year has done the trick at last. I look a positive sylph! And such a nice, pale complexion, too. Why, anybody might take me for Angela's sister."

And she went forward, highly pleased with herself.

"I say!" thought Miss Sutton, following next. "That's a good line, if you like. And isn't that a lovely sort of haggard look that new face-powder has given me! I'm not the least conceited, of course, but I'm certainly going to have a lot more fun out here before I let anyone marry me."

And she went forward, highly pleased with herself. And then:—

"Oh, Gosh!" thought Chunks Rivers, bringing up the rear. "Just look at that pasty-faced, narrow-chested chimpanzee, I ask you! I might as well chuck myself in the sea as try to get a girl like Miss Sutton to care for me. Oh, blank and blazes!"

And he went forward, as wretched a young gentleman as any in the whole length of the Riviera.

Nor was there anything to raise his spirits at the luncheon that followed. He stared despairingly at Miss Sutton, he thought destructively of Captain Hector, and he ate indiscriminately of whatever he discovered on his plate. And Miss Sutton told him what a success she had had in New York, and what fun it would be when all the American young men—and old men, too—started coming over to London on their spring trips. And Mrs. Sutton said: "Why, Angela, what do you mean by talking as if you were grown-up?" And Mr. Sutton said: "That's right, my dear. We want to keep our little girl at home with us as long as we can, eh?" And Mrs. Sutton said: "Of course we do. Why, ten years will be soon enough for *her* to think of leaving us. Just pass me another of those delicious rolls."

And all this made Chunks Rivers feel more unutterably despondent than ever. He tried hard to fling out his chest, and to steer the conversation round to a parachute mishap of which there had been an account in the morning papers; but the memory of that sallow, callow, and weedy image was too much for him. And, besides, Miss

Sutton hardly seemed to be listening to a word that he said. He still looks back on that luncheon at the Café Angelo as the darkest hour—or perhaps one should say two hours and a half—in his whole career.

But at last it was over. At last Mr. Sutton put down the stub of his cigar and Mrs. Sutton powdered her nose with an air of finality, and Angela shrugged her shoulders and began drawing on her gloves. And then they all took deep breaths and rose from their chairs—which were quickly snatched away from them by attentive and well-tipped waiters—and started marching out again.

AND thus, at about three-forty p.m. on this seventeenth of January, they came face to face with the second of the two mirrors on that fixed screen just inside the doorway; the mirror which was, as you may remember, ever so slightly convex and ever, ever so slightly pink.

"Merciful powers!" thought Mr. and Mrs. Sutton—or words to that effect. "Can that stout, waddling, beetroot-faced creature be me? What a fool I was to eat all that lunch! What an idiot I was to think that I could stop my diet (or leave off my elastic underwear, or give up my massage, or treat myself as if I were Angela's age), when I'm really looking like that! I must go back to London at once and see that Captain Hector, who they all say is so wonderful. And as for Angela, the sooner she settles down and gives me a chance to cut out all this travelling and eating, the better. If I'm not more careful, I shall be having a stroke!"

And: "Oh!" thought Miss Sutton. "Don't tell me that fat girl with the purple face isn't heading straight for the shelf! I knew all along that twenty-three was a ghastly age, and I expect everyone's laughing at me already, if I only knew. I shall never care for anybody but Chunks Rivers—even though we have such different ideas about things—but I've probably left it too late now, and why on earth did I tease him with all that rubbish about the Americans, when I know perfectly well that I don't care two pins for any of them? Oh, what an absolute fool I've been!"

She rushed out to the waiting car, meaning to borrow her mother's goggles, so that she could weep softly on the back seat. But the back seat was already full. Mr. and Mrs. Sutton were talking away, sixteen to the dozen, about how soon they could get the London house open again, and about playing golf together every day, and buying a medicine-ball to keep in their bedroom; and swearing aloud that never again would they have afternoon tea, new bread, potatoes, or drinks between meals.

And as their daughter took in this dialogue and spectacle, there was a sound of firm, manly footsteps just behind her. And someone caught hold of her arm.

"Come along, Angela," said Chunks Rivers. "Hop in beside me."

He wrenched the door open, almost lifted her in, slammed it behind her, ran round to the other side, and vaulted into the driver's seat with the agility of a professional acrobat.

"Now, then," he said, as the car shot away, "I called you 'Angela' just then, didn't I?"

"Yes," murmured Miss Sutton, faintly.

"But I'll call you 'darling,' if you prefer," said Chunks Rivers. "I'm a man, I am; and I'm sick of trailing around after you like a moon-faced milksop. Will you marry me, or won't you?"

"Oh, Chunks — darling!" said Miss Sutton.

"Aha!" said Chunks. "Good! And look here, my girl, you may as well know the truth about me, too. I *hate* accidents and blood, and all that. Do you understand? There'll be no more nonsense about that after we're married."

"But, Chunks darling, I hate them just as much. I thought——"

"What!" said Chunks. "But don't you remember the first time we met?"

"At that polo-match?"

"Yes. And all those fellows and their ponies fell in a heap, and——"

"All which fellows and their ponies did what?" cried Miss Sutton, with her eyes starting out of her head.

"Don't trifle with me," said Chunks Rivers. "You saw them perfectly well, and you said, 'How lovely!'"

"But I didn't see them," protested Miss Sutton. "I never looked at them once all the afternoon, in case they did fall down; and—yes, I remember absolutely now—I said 'How lovely!' because I'd just seen a woman I thought might be Gladys Cooper at the end of our row, and she was wearing a hat that—— Oh, Chunks! Oh, Chunks—why didn't you tell me all this at the beginning?"

And so the Brecknock Six sped along the dusty, dangerous roads—a bit unsteadily at times—towards the happiest of happy endings. And all because that second mirror in the Café Angelo was ever so slightly convex and ever, ever so slightly pink.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE LION'S MANE

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

BY

A. Conan Doyle

Illustrated by
HOWARD K. ELCOCK

IT is a most singular thing that a problem which was certainly as abstruse and unusual as any which I have faced in my long professional career should have come to me after my retirement; and be brought, as it were, to my very door. It occurred after my withdrawal to my little Sussex home, when I had given myself up entirely to that soothing life of Nature for which I had so often yearned during the long years spent amid the gloom of London. At this period of my life the good Watson had passed almost beyond my ken. An occasional week-end visit was the most that I ever saw of him. Thus I must act as my own chronicler. Ah! had he but been with me, how much he might have made of so wonderful a happening, and of my eventual triumph against every difficulty! As it is, however, I must needs tell my tale in my own plain way, showing by my words each step upon the difficult road which lay before me as I searched for the mystery of the Lion's Mane.

My villa is situated upon the southern slope of the Downs, commanding a great view of the Channel. At this point the coast-line is entirely of chalk cliffs, which can only be descended by a single, long, tortuous path, which is steep and slippery. At the bottom of the path lie a hundred yards of pebbles and shingle, even when the tide is at full. Here and there, however, there are curves and hollows, which make splendid swimming pools filled afresh with each flow. This admirable beach extends for some miles in each direction, save only at one point where the little cove and village of Fulworth break the line.

My house is lonely. I, my old housekeeper, and my bees have the estate all to ourselves. Half a mile off, however, is Harold Stackhurst's well-known coaching establishment, The Gables, quite a large place, which contains some score of young fellows preparing for various professions, with a staff of several masters. Stackhurst himself was a well-known rowing Blue in his day, and an excellent all-round scholar. He and I were always friendly from the day I came to the coast, and he was the one man who was on such terms with me that we could drop in on each other in the evenings without an invitation.

Towards the end of July, 1907, there was a severe gale, the wind blowing up Channel, heaping the seas to the base of the cliffs, and leaving a lagoon at the turn of the tide. On the morning of which I speak the wind had abated, and all Nature was newly washed and fresh. It was impossible to work upon so delightful a day, and I strolled out before breakfast to enjoy the exquisite

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air. I walked along the cliff path which led to the steep descent to the beach. As I walked I heard a shout behind me, and there was Harold Stackhurst waving his hand in cheery greeting.

"What a morning, Mr. Holmes! I thought I should see you out."

"Going for a swim, I see."

"At your old tricks again," he laughed, patting his bulging pocket. "Yes. McPherson started early, and I expect I may find him there."

Fitzroy McPherson was the science master, a fine upstanding young fellow whose life had been crippled by heart trouble following rheumatic fever. He was a natural athlete, however, and excelled in every game which did not throw too great a strain upon him. Summer and winter he went for his swim, and, as I am a swimmer myself, I have often joined him.

At this moment we saw the man himself. His head showed above the edge of the cliff where the path ends. Then his whole figure appeared at the top, staggering like a drunken man. The next instant he threw up his hands and, with a terrible cry, fell upon his face. Stackhurst and I rushed forward—it may have been fifty yards—and turned him on his back. He was obviously dying. Those glazed sunken eyes and dreadful livid cheeks could mean nothing else. One glimmer of life came into his face for an instant, and he uttered two or three words with an eager air of warning. They were slurred and indistinct, but to my ear the last of them, which burst in a shriek from his lips, were "the lion's mane." It was utterly irrelevant and unintelligible, and yet I could twist the sound into no other sense. Then he half raised himself from the ground, threw his arms into the air, and fell forward on his side. He was dead.

My companion was paralysed by the sudden horror of it, but I, as may well be imagined, had every sense on the alert. And I had need, for it was speedily evident that we were in the presence of an extraordinary case. The man was dressed only in his Burberry overcoat, his trousers, and an unlaced pair of canvas shoes. As he fell over, his Burberry, which had been simply thrown round his shoulders, slipped off, exposing his trunk. We stared at it in amazement. His back was covered with dark red lines as though he had been terribly flogged by a thin wire scourge. The instrument with which this punishment had been inflicted was clearly flexible, for the long, angry weals curved round his shoulders and ribs. There was blood dripping down his chin, for he had bitten through his lower lip in the paroxysm of his agony. His drawn and distorted face told how terrible that agony had been.

I was kneeling and Stackhurst standing by the body when a shadow fell across us, and we found that Ian Murdoch was by our side. Murdoch was the mathematical coach at the establishment, a tall, dark, thin man, so taciturn and aloof that none can be said to have been his friend. He seemed to live in some high, abstract region of surds and conic sections with little to connect him with ordinary life. He was looked upon as an oddity by the students, and would have been their butt, but there was some strange outlandish blood in the man, which showed itself not only in his coal-black eyes and swarthy face, but also in occasional outbreaks of temper, which could only be described as ferocious. On one occasion, being plagued by a little dog belonging to McPherson, he had caught the creature up and hurled it through the plate-glass window, an action for which Stackhurst would certainly have given him his dismissal had he not been a very valuable teacher. Such was the strange, complex man who now appeared beside us. He seemed to be honestly shocked at the sight before him, though the incident of the dog may show that there was no great sympathy between the dead man and himself.

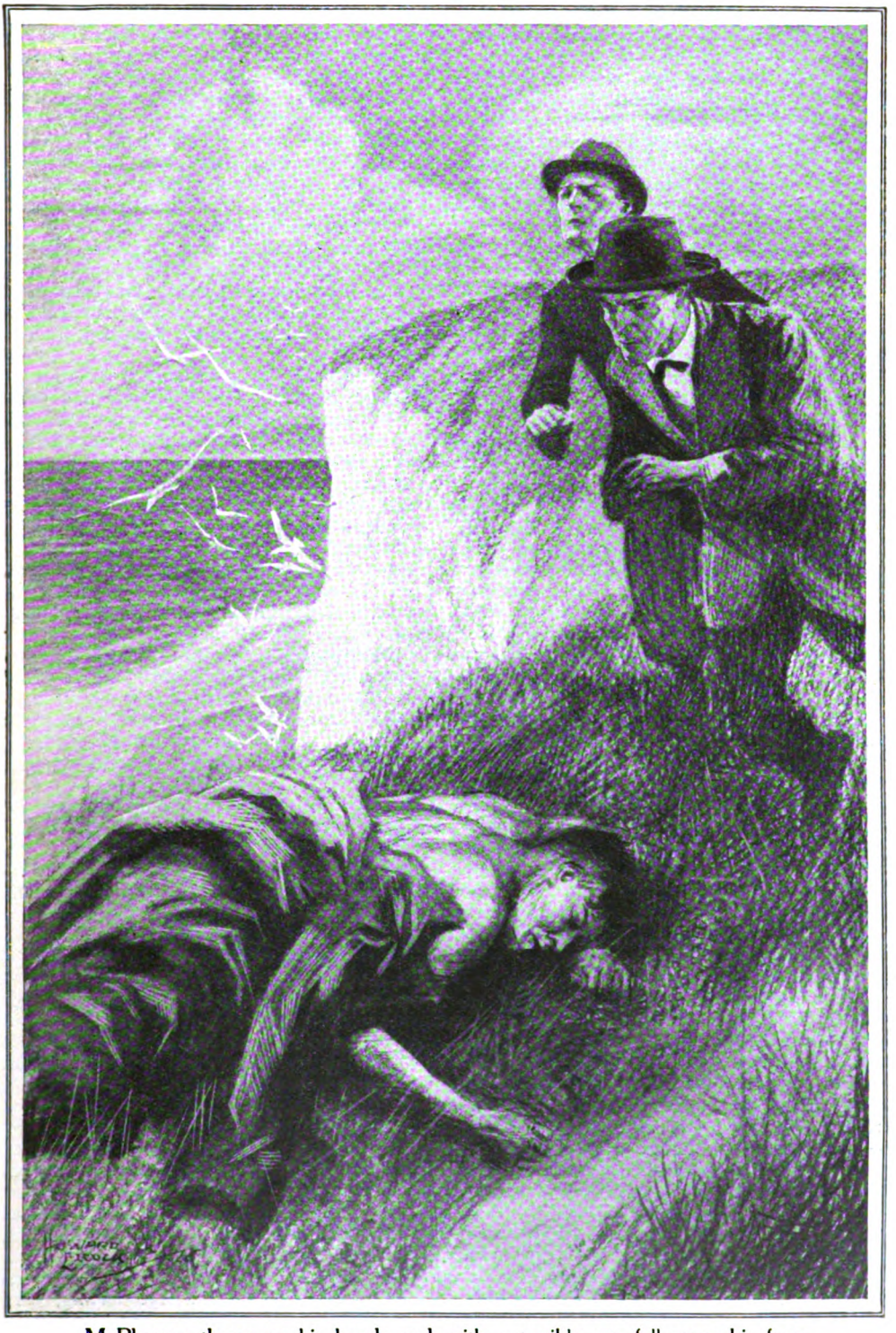
"Poor fellow! Poor fellow! What can I do? How can I help?"

"Were you with him? Can you tell us what has happened?"

"No, no. I was late this morning. I was not on the beach at all. I have come straight from The Gables. What can I do?"

"You can hurry to the police-station at Fulworth. Report the matter at once."

WITHOUT a word he made off at top speed, and I proceeded to take the matter in hand, while Stackhurst, dazed at this tragedy, remained by the body. My first task naturally was to note who was on the beach. From the top of the path I could see the whole sweep of it, and it was absolutely deserted, save that two or three dark figures could be seen far away moving towards the village of Fulworth. Having satisfied myself upon this point, I walked slowly down the path. There was clay or soft marl mixed with the chalk, and every here and there I saw the same footstep, both ascending and descending. No one else had gone down to the beach by this track that morning. At one place I observed the print of an open hand with the fingers towards the incline. This could only mean that poor McPherson had fallen as he ascended. There were rounded depressions, too, which suggested that he had come down upon his knees more than



McPherson threw up his hands and, with a terrible cry, fell upon his face.
Stackhurst and I rushed forward.

once. At the bottom of the path was the considerable lagoon left by the retreating tide. At the side of it McPherson had undressed, for there lay his towel on a rock. It was folded and dry, so that it would seem that after all he had never entered the water. Once or twice as I hunted round amid the hard shingle I came on little patches of sand where the print of his canvas shoe, and also of his naked foot, could be seen. The latter fact proved that he had made all ready to bathe, though the towel indicated that he had not actually done so.

And here was the problem clearly defined—as strange a one as had ever confronted me. The man had not been on the beach more than a quarter of an hour at the most. Stackhurst had followed him from The Gables, so there could be no doubt about that. He had gone to bathe and had stripped, as the naked footsteps showed. Then he had suddenly huddled on his clothes again—they were all dishevelled and unfastened—and he had returned without bathing, or at any rate without drying himself. And the reason for his change of purpose had been that he had been scourged in some savage, inhuman fashion, tortured until he bit his lip through in his agony, and was left with only strength enough to crawl away and to die. Who had done this barbarous deed? There were, it is true, small grottoes and caves in the base of the cliffs, but the low sun shone directly into them, and there was no place for concealment. Then, again, there were those distant figures on the beach. They seemed too far away to have been connected with the crime, and the broad lagoon in which McPherson had intended to bathe lay between him and them, lapping up to the rocks. On the sea two or three fishing boats were at no great distance. Their occupants might be examined at our leisure. There were several roads for inquiry, but none which led to any very obvious goal.

When I at last returned to the body I found that a little group of wandering folk had gathered round it. Stackhurst was, of course, still there, and Ian Murdoch had just arrived with Anderson, the village constable, a big, ginger-moustached man of the slow, solid Sussex breed—a breed which covers much good sense under a heavy, silent exterior. He listened to everything, took note of all we said, and finally drew me aside.

"I'd be glad of your advice, Mr. Holmes. This is a big thing for me to handle, and I'll hear of it from Lewes if I go wrong."

I advised him to send for his immediate superior, and for a doctor; also to allow nothing to be moved, and as few fresh footmarks as possible to be made, until they came. In the meantime I searched the dead man's pockets. There were his handkerchief, a large knife, and a small folding card-case. From this projected a slip of paper, which I unfolded and handed to the constable. There was written on it in a scrawling, feminine hand: "I will be there, you may be sure. Maudie." It read like a love affair, an assignation, though when and where were a blank. The constable replaced it in the card-case and returned it with the other things to the pockets of the Burberry. Then, as nothing more suggested itself, I walked back to my house for breakfast, having first arranged that the base of the cliffs should be thoroughly searched.

STACKHURST was round in an hour or two to tell me that the body had been removed to The Gables, where the inquest would be held. He brought with him some serious and definite news. As I expected, nothing had been found in the small caves below the cliff, but he had examined the papers in McPherson's desk, and there were several which showed an intimate correspondence with a certain Miss Maud Bellamy, of Fulworth. We had then established the identity of the writer of the note.

"The police have the letters," he explained. "I could not bring them. But there is no doubt that it was a serious love affair. I see no reason, however, to connect it with that horrible happening, save, indeed, that the lady had made an appointment with him."

"But hardly at a bathing-pool which all of you were in the habit of using," I remarked.

"It is mere chance," said he, "that several of the students were not with McPherson."

"*Was* it mere chance?"

Stackhurst knit his brows in thought.

"Ian Murdoch held them back," said he; "he would insist upon some algebraic demonstration before breakfast. Poor chap, he is dreadfully cut up about it all."

"And yet I gather that they were not friends."

"At one time they were not. But for a year or more Murdoch has been as near to McPherson as he ever could be to anyone. He is not of a very sympathetic disposition by nature."

"So I understand. I seem to remember your telling me once about a quarrel over the ill-usage of a dog."

"That blew over all right."

"But left some vindictive feeling, perhaps."

"No, no; I am sure they were real friends."

" Well, then, we must explore the matter of the girl. Do you know her ? "

" Everyone knows her. She is the beauty of the neighbourhood—a real beauty, Holmes, who would draw attention everywhere. I knew that McPherson was attracted by her, but I had no notion that it had gone so far as these letters would seem to indicate."

" But who is she ? "

" She is the daughter of old Tom Bellamy, who owns all the boats and bathing-cots at Fulworth. He was a fisherman to start with, but is now a man of some substance. He and his son William run the business."

" Shall we walk into Fulworth and see them ? "

" On what pretext ? "

" Oh, we can easily find a pretext. After all, this poor man did not ill-use himself in this outrageous way. Some human hand was on the handle of that scourge, if indeed it was a scourge which inflicted the injuries. His circle of acquaintance in this lonely place was surely limited. Let us follow it up in every direction and we can hardly fail to come upon the motive, which in turn should lead us to the criminal."

It would have been a pleasant walk across the thyme-scented Downs had our minds not been poisoned by the tragedy we had witnessed. The village of Fulworth lies in a hollow curving in a semicircle round the bay. Behind the old-fashioned hamlet several modern houses have been built upon the rising ground. It was to one of these that Stackhurst guided me.

" That's The Haven, as Bellamy called it. The one with the corner tower and slate roof. Not bad for a man who started with nothing but—— By Jove, look at that ! "

The garden gate of The Haven had opened and a man had emerged. There was no mistaking that tall, angular, straggling figure. It was Ian Murdoch, the mathematician. A moment later we confronted him upon the road.

" Hullo ! " said Stackhurst. The man nodded, gave us a sideways glance from his curious dark eyes, and would have passed us, but his principal pulled him up.

" What were you doing there ? " he asked.

Murdoch's face flushed with anger. " I am your subordinate, sir, under your roof. I am not aware that I owe you any account of my private actions."

Stackhurst's nerves were near the surface after all he had endured. Otherwise perhaps he would have waited. Now he lost his temper completely.

" In the circumstances your answer is pure impertinence, Mr. Murdoch."

" Your own question might perhaps come under the same heading."

" This is not the first time that I have had to overlook your insubordinate ways. It will certainly be the last. You will kindly make fresh arrangements for your future as speedily as you can."

" I had intended to do so. I have lost to-day the only person who made The Gables habitable."

He strode off upon his way, while Stackhurst, with angry eyes, stood glaring after him. " Is he not an impossible, intolerable man ? " he cried.

The one thing that impressed itself forcibly upon my mind was that Mr. Ian Murdoch was taking the first chance to open a path of escape from the scene of the crime. Suspicion, vague and nebulous, was now beginning to take outline in my mind. Perhaps the visit to the Bellamys might throw some further light upon the matter. Stackhurst pulled himself together and we went forward to the house.

MR. BELLAMY proved to be a middle-aged man with a flaming red beard. He seemed to be in a very angry mood, and his face was soon as florid as his hair.

" No, sir, I do not desire any particulars. My son here "—indicating a powerful young man, with a heavy, sullen face, in the corner of the sitting-room—" is of one mind with me that Mr. McPherson's attentions to Maud were insulting. Yes, sir, the word ' marriage ' was never mentioned, and yet there were letters and meetings, and a great deal more of which neither of us could approve. She has no mother, and we are her only guardians. We are determined——"

But the words were taken from his mouth by the appearance of the lady herself. There was no gainsaying that she would have graced any assembly in the world. Who could have imagined that so rare a flower would grow from such a root and in such an atmosphere ? Women have seldom been an attraction to me, for my brain has always governed my heart, but I could not look upon her perfect clear-cut face, with all the soft freshness of the Downlands in her delicate colouring, without realizing that no young man would cross her path unscathed. Such was the girl who had pushed open the door and stood now, wide-eyed and intense, in front of Harold Stackhurst.

" I know already that Fitzroy is dead," she said. " Do not be afraid to tell me the particulars."

" This other gentleman of yours let us know the news," explained the father.

" There is no reason why my sister should be brought into the matter," growled the younger man.

The sister turned a sharp, fierce look upon

him. "This is my business, William. Kindly leave me to manage it in my own way. By all accounts there has been a crime committed. If I can help to show who did it, it is the least I can do for him who is gone."

She listened to a short account from my companion, with a composed concentration which showed me that she possessed strong character as well as great beauty. Maud Bellamy will always remain in my memory as a most complete and remarkable woman. It seems that she already knew me by sight, for she turned to me at the end.

"Bring them to justice, Mr. Holmes. You have my sympathy and my help, whoever they may be." It seemed to me that she glanced defiantly at her father and brother as she spoke.

"Thank you," said I. "I value a woman's instinct in such matters. You use the word 'they.' You think that more than one was concerned?"

"I knew Mr. McPherson well enough to be aware that he was a brave and a strong man. No single person could ever have inflicted such an outrage upon him."

"Might I have one word with you alone?"

"I tell you, Maud, not to mix yourself up in the matter," cried her father, angrily.

She looked at me helplessly. "What can I do?"

"The whole world will know the facts presently, so there can be no harm if I discuss them here," said I. "I should have preferred privacy, but if your father will not allow it, he must share the deliberations." Then I spoke of the note which had been found in the dead man's pocket. "It is sure to be produced at the inquest. May I ask you to throw any light upon it that you can?"

"I see no reason for mystery," she answered. "We were engaged to be married, and we only kept it secret because Fitzroy's uncle, who is very old and said to be dying, might have disinherited him if he had married against his wish. There was no other reason."

"You could have told us," growled Mr. Bellamy.

"So I would, father, if you had ever shown sympathy."

"I object to my girl picking up with men outside her own station."

"It was your prejudice against him which prevented us from telling you. As to this appointment"—she fumbled in her dress and produced a crumpled note—"it was in answer to this."

"Dearest," ran the message: "The old place on the beach just after sunset on Tuesday. It is the only time I can get away.—F. M."

"Tuesday was to-day, and I had meant to meet him to-night."

I turned over the paper. "This never came by post. How did you get it?"

"I would rather not answer that question. It has really nothing to do with the matter which you are investigating. But anything which bears upon that I will most freely answer."

She was as good as her word, but there was nothing which was helpful in our investigation. She had no reason to think that her *fiancé* had any hidden enemy, but she admitted that she had had several warm admirers.

"May I ask if Mr. Ian Murdoch was one of them?"

She blushed and seemed confused.

"There was a time when I thought he was. But that was all changed when he understood the relations between Fitzroy and myself."

Again the shadow round this strange man seemed to me to be taking more definite shape. His record must be examined. His rooms must be privately searched. Stackhurst was a willing collaborator, for in his mind also suspicions were forming. We returned from our visit to The Haven with the hope that one free end of this tangled skein was already in our hands.

A WEEK passed. The inquest had thrown no light upon the matter, and had been adjourned for further evidence. Stackhurst had made discreet inquiry about his subordinate, and there had been a superficial search of his room, but without result. Personally, I had gone over the whole ground again both physically and mentally, but with no new conclusions. In all my chronicles the reader will find no case which brought me so completely to the limit of my powers. Ever my imagination could conceive no solution to the mystery. And then there came the incident of the dog.

It was my old housekeeper who heard of it first by that strange wireless by which such people collect the news of the countryside.

"Sad story this, sir, about Mr. McPherson's dog," said she one evening.

I do not encourage such conversations, but the words arrested my attention.

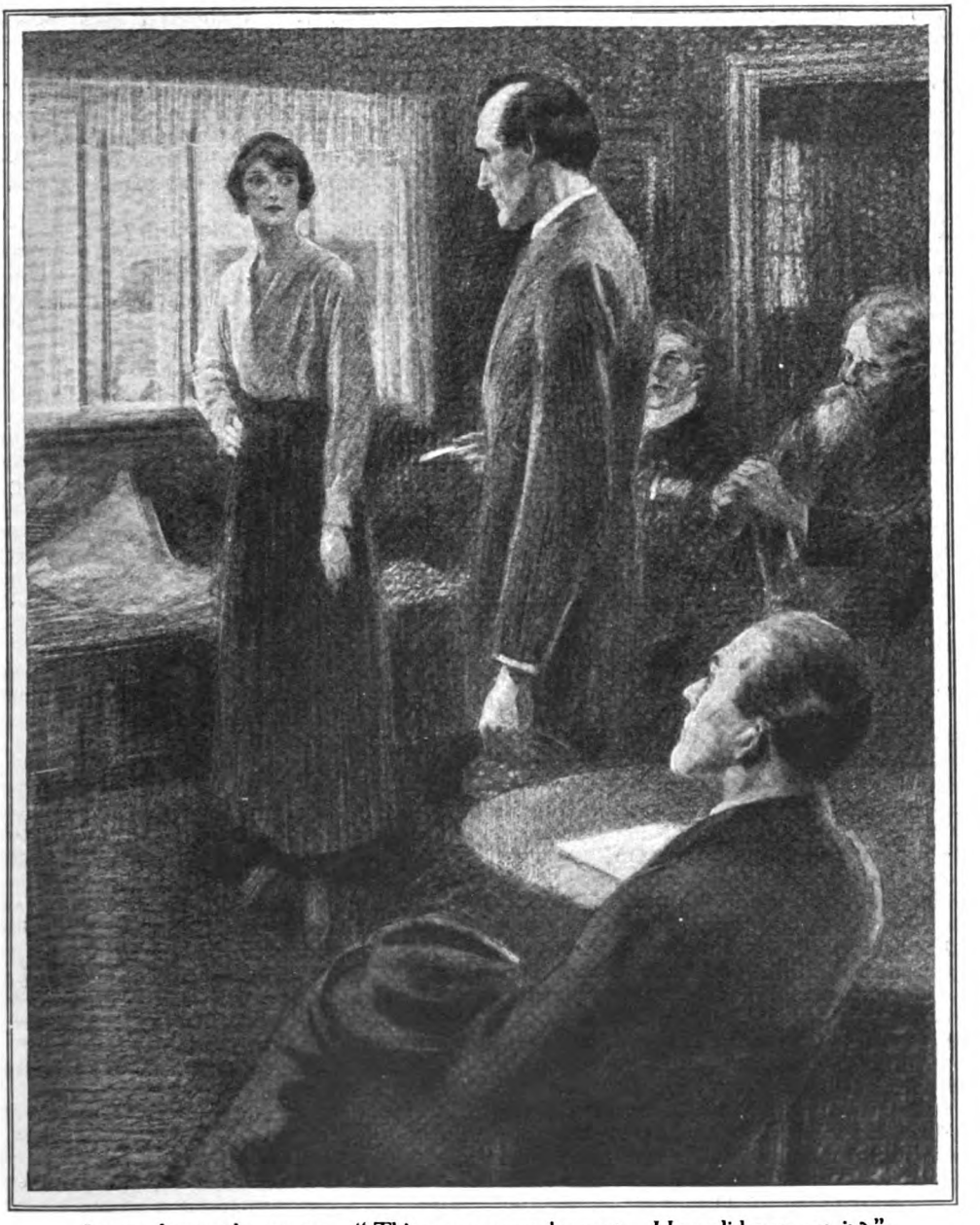
"What of Mr. McPherson's dog?"

"Dead, sir. Died of grief for its master."

"Who told you this?"

"Why, sir, everyone is talking of it. It took on terrible, and has eaten nothing for a week. Then to-day two of the young gentlemen from The Gables found it dead down on the beach, sir, at the very place where its master met his end."

"At the very place." The words stood



I turned over the paper. "This never came by post. How did you get it?"
"I would rather not answer that question."

out clear in my memory. Some dim perception that the matter was vital rose in my mind. That the dog should die was after the beautiful, faithful nature of dogs. But 'in the very place'! Why should this lonely beach be fatal to it? Was it possible that it, also, had been sacrificed to some revengeful feud? Was it possible——?

Yes, the perception was dim, but already something was building up in my mind. In a few minutes I was on my way to The Gables, where I found Stackhurst in his study. At my request he sent for Sudbury and Blount, the two students who had found the dog.

"Yes, it lay on the very edge of the

pool," said one of them. "It must have followed the trail of its dead master."

I saw the faithful little creature, an Airedale terrier, laid out upon the mat in the hall. The body was stiff and rigid, the eyes projecting, and the limbs contorted. There was agony in every line of it.

FROM The Gables I walked down to the bathing-pool. The sun had sunk and the shadow of the great cliff lay black across the water, which glimmered dully like a sheet of lead. The place was deserted and there was no sign of life save for two sea-birds circling and screaming overhead. In the fading light I could dimly make out the little dog's spoor upon the sand round the very rock on which his master's towel had been laid. For a long time I stood in deep meditation while the shadows grew darker around me. My mind was filled with racing thoughts. You have known what it was to be in a nightmare in which you feel that there is some all-important thing for which you search and which you know is there, though it remains for ever just beyond your reach. That was how I felt that evening as I stood alone by that place of death. Then at last I turned and walked slowly homewards.

I had just reached the top of the path when it came to me. Like a flash, I remembered the thing for which I had so eagerly and vainly grasped. You will know, or Watson has written in vain, that I hold a vast store of out-of-the-way knowledge, without scientific system, but very available for the needs of my work. My mind is like a crowded box-room with packets of all sorts stowed away therein—so many that I may well have but a vague perception of what was there. I had known that there was something which might bear upon this matter. It was still vague, but at least I knew how I could make it clear. It was monstrous, incredible, and yet it was always a possibility. I would test it to the full.

There is a great garret in my little house which is stuffed with books. It was into this that I plunged and rummaged for an hour. At the end of that time I emerged with a little chocolate and silver volume. Eagerly I turned up the chapter of which I had a dim remembrance. Yes, it was indeed a far-fetched and unlikely proposition, and yet I could not be at rest until I had made sure if it might, indeed, be so. It was late when I retired, with my mind eagerly awaiting the work of the morrow.

But that work met with an annoying interruption. I had hardly swallowed my early cup of tea and was starting for the beach when I had a call from Inspector Bardle of the Sussex Constabulary—a steady, solid, bovine man with thoughtful eyes, which looked at me now with a very troubled expression.

"I know your immense experience, sir," said he. "This is quite unofficial, of course, and need go no farther. But I am fairly up against it in this McPherson case. The question is, shall I make an arrest, or shall I not?"

"Meaning Mr. Ian Murdoch?"

"Yes, sir. There is really no one else when you come to think of it. That's the advantage of this solitude. We narrow it down to a very small compass. If he did not do it, then who did?"

"What have you against him?"

He had gleaned along the same furrows as I had. There was Murdoch's character and the mystery which seemed to hang round the man. His furious bursts of temper, as shown in the incident of the dog. The fact that he had quarrelled with McPherson in the past, and that there was some reason to think that he might have resented his attentions to Miss Bellamy. He had all my points, but no fresh ones, save that Murdoch seemed to be making every preparation for departure.

"What would my position be if I let him slip away with all this evidence against him?" The burly phlegmatic man was sorely troubled in his mind.

"CONSIDER," I said, "all the essential gaps in your case. On the morning of the crime he can surely prove an alibi. He had been with his scholars till the last moment, and within a few minutes of McPherson's appearance he came upon us from behind. Then bear in mind the absolute impossibility that he could single-handed have inflicted this outrage upon a man quite as strong as himself. Finally, there is this question of the instrument with which these injuries were inflicted."

"What could it be but a scourge or flexible whip of some sort?"

"Have you examined the marks?" I asked.

"I have seen them. So has the doctor."

"But I have examined them very carefully with a lens. They have peculiarities."

"What are they, Mr. Holmes?"

I stepped to my bureau and brought out an enlarged photograph. "This is my method in such cases," I explained.

"You certainly do things thoroughly, Mr. Holmes."

"I should hardly be what I am if I did not. Now let us consider this weal which extends round the right shoulder. Do you observe nothing remarkable?"

"I can't say I do."

"Surely it is evident that it is unequal in

its intensity. There is a dot of extravasated blood here, and another there. There are similar indications in this other weal down here. What can that mean ? "

" I have no idea. Have you ? "

" Perhaps I have. Perhaps I haven't. I may be able to say more soon. Anything which will define what made that mark will bring us a long way towards the criminal."

" It is, of course, an absurd idea," said the policeman, " but if a red-hot net of wire had been laid across the back, then these better-marked points would represent where the meshes crossed each other."

" A most ingenious comparison. Or shall we say a very stiff cat-o'-nine-tails with small hard knots upon it ? "

" By Jove, Mr. Holmes, I think you have hit it."

" Or there may be some very different cause, Mr. Bardle. But your case is far too weak for an arrest. Besides, we have those last words—' Lion's Mane.' "

" I have wondered whether Ian——"

" Yes, I have considered that. If the second word had borne any resemblance to Murdoch—but it did not. He gave it almost in a shriek. I am sure that it was ' Mane.' "

" Have you no alternative, Mr. Holmes ? "

" Perhaps I have. But I do not care to discuss it until there is something more solid to discuss."

" And when will that be ? "

" In an hour—possibly less."

The Inspector rubbed his chin and looked at me with dubious eyes.

" I wish I could see what was in your mind, Mr. Holmes. Perhaps it's those fishing-boats."

" No, no; they were too far out."

" Well, then, is it Bellamy and that big son of his ? They were not too sweet upon Mr. McPherson. Could they have done him a mischief ? "

" No, no; you won't draw me until I am ready," said I with a smile. " Now, Inspector, we each have our own work to do. Perhaps if you were to meet me here at midday—— ? "

So far we had got when there came the tremendous interruption which was the beginning of the end.

My outer door was flung open, there were blundering footsteps in the passage, and Ian Murdoch staggered into the room, pallid, dishevelled, his clothes in wild disorder, clawing with his bony hands at the furniture to hold himself erect. " Brandy ! Brandy ! " he gasped, and fell groaning upon the sofa.

He was not alone. Behind him came Stackhurst, hatless and panting, almost as *distrait* as his companion.

" Yes, yes, brandy ! " he cried. " The man is at his last gasp. It was all I could do to bring him here. He fainted twice upon the way."

Half a tumbler of the raw spirit brought about a wondrous change. He pushed himself up on one arm and swung his coat from off his shoulders. " For God's sake ! oil, opium, morphia ! " he cried. " Anything to ease this infernal agony ! "

The Inspector and I cried out at the sight. There, criss-crossed upon the man's naked shoulder, was the same strange reticulated pattern of red inflamed lines which had been the death-mark of Fitzroy McPherson.

The pain was evidently terrible and was more than local, for the sufferer's breathing would stop for a time, his face would turn black, and then with loud gasps he would clap his hand to his heart, while his brow dropped beads of sweat. At any moment he might die. More and more brandy was poured down his throat, each fresh dose bringing him back to life. Pads of cotton-wool soaked in salad-oil seemed to take the agony from the strange wounds. At last his head fell heavily upon the cushion. Exhausted Nature had taken refuge in its last storehouse of vitality. It was half a sleep and half a faint, but at least it was ease from pain.

To question him had been impossible, but the moment we were assured of his condition Stackhurst turned upon me.

" My God ! " he cried, " what is it, Holmes ? What is it ? "

" Where did you find him ? "

" Down on the beach. Exactly where poor McPherson met his end. If this man's heart had been weak as McPherson's was he would not be here now. More than once I thought he was gone as I brought him up. It was too far to The Gables, so I made for you. '

" Did you see him on the beach ? "

" I was walking on the cliff when I heard his cry. He was at the edge of the water, reeling about like a drunken man. I ran down, threw some clothes over him, and brought him up. For Heaven's sake, Holmes, use all the powers you have and spare no pains to lift the curse from this place, for life is becoming unendurable. Can you, with all your world-wide reputation, do nothing for us ? "

" I think I can, Stackhurst. Come with me now ! And you, Inspector, come along ! We will see if we cannot deliver this murderer into your hands."

Leaving the unconscious man in the charge of my housekeeper, we all three went down to the deadly lagoon. On the shingle there was piled a little heap of towels and clothes, left by the stricken man. Slowly I walked round the edge of the water, my comrades in Indian file behind me. Most of the pool

was quite shallow, but under the cliff where the beach was hollowed out it was four or five feet deep. It was to this part that a swimmer would naturally go, for it formed a beautiful pellucid green pool as clear as crystal. A line of rocks lay above it at the base of the cliff, and along this I led the way, peering eagerly into the depths beneath me. I had reached the deepest and stillest pool when my eyes caught that for which they were searching, and I burst into a shout of triumph.

"Cyanea!" I cried. "Cyanea! Behold the Lion's Mane!"

The strange object at which I pointed did indeed look like a tangled mass torn from the mane of a lion. It lay upon a rocky shelf some three feet under the water, a curious waving, vibrating, hairy creature with streaks of silver among its yellow tresses. It pulsated with a slow, heavy dilation and contraction.

"It has done mischief enough. Its day is over!" I cried. "Help me, Stackhurst! Let us end the murderer for ever."

There was a big boulder just above the ledge, and we pushed it until it fell with a tremendous splash into the water. When the ripples had cleared we saw that it had settled upon the ledge below. One flapping edge of yellow membrane showed that our victim was beneath it. A thick oily scum oozed out from below the stone and stained the water round, rising slowly to the surface.

My door was flung open and Ian Murdoch staggered into the room.

"Well, this gets me!" cried the Inspector. "What was it, Mr. Holmes? I'm born and bred in these parts, but I never saw such a thing. It don't belong to Sussex."

"Just as well for Sussex," I remarked. "It may have been the south-west gale that brought it up. Come back to my house, both of you, and I will give you the terrible experience of one who has good reason to remember his own meeting with the same peril of the seas."

WHEN we reached my study, we found that Murdoch was so far recovered that he could sit up. He was dazed in mind, and every now and then was shaken

by a paroxysm of pain. In broken words he explained that he had no notion what had occurred to him, save that terrific pangs had suddenly shot through him, and that it had taken all his fortitude to reach the bank.

" Here is a book," I said, taking up the little volume, " which first brought light into what might have been for ever dark. It is ' Out of Doors,' by the famous observer J. G. Wood. Wood himself very nearly perished from contact with this vile creature, so he wrote with a very full knowledge. *Cyanea Capillata* is the miscreant's full name, and he can be as dangerous to life as, and far more painful than, the bite of the cobra. Let me briefly give this extract.

" ' If the bather should see a loose roundish mass of tawny membranes and fibres, something like very large handfuls of lion's mane and silver paper, let him beware, for this is the fearful stinger, *Cyanea Capillata*.' Could our sinister acquaintance be more clearly described ?

" He goes on to tell his own encounter with one when swimming off the coast of Kent. He found that the creature radiated almost invisible filaments to the distance of fifty feet, and that anyone within that circumference from the deadly centre was in danger of death. Even at a distance the effect upon Wood was almost fatal. ' The multitudinous threads caused light scarlet lines upon the skin which on closer examination resolved into minute dots or pustules, each dot charged as it were with a red-hot needle making its way through the nerves.'

" The local pain was, as he explains, the least part of the exquisite torment. ' Pangs shot through the chest, causing me to fall as if struck by a bullet. The pulsation would cease, and then the heart would give six or seven leaps as if it would force its way through the chest.'

" It nearly killed him, although he had only been exposed to it in the disturbed ocean and not in the narrow calm waters of a bathing-pool. He says that he could hardly recognize himself afterwards, so

" Brandy ! Brandy ! " he gasped, and fell groaning upon the sofa.

white, wrinkled, and shrivelled was his face. He gulped down brandy, a whole bottleful, and it seems to have saved his life. There is the book, Inspector. I leave it with you, and you cannot doubt that it contains a full explanation of the tragedy of poor McPherson."

"And incidentally exonerates me," remarked Ian Murdoch with a wry smile "I do not blame you, Inspector, nor you, Mr. Holmes, for your suspicions were natural. I feel that on the very eve of my arrest I have only cleared myself by sharing the fate of my poor friend."

"No, Mr. Murdoch. I was already upon the track, and had I been out as early as I intended I might well have saved you from this terrific experience."

"But how did you know, Mr. Holmes?"

"I am an omnivorous reader with a strangely retentive memory for trifles. That phrase 'Lion's Mane' haunted my mind. I knew that I had seen it somewhere in an unexpected context. You have seen that it does describe the creature. I have no doubt that it was floating on the water when McPherson saw it, and that this phrase was the only one by which he could convey to us a warning as to the creature which had been his death."

"Then I, at least, am cleared," said Murdoch, rising slowly to his feet. "There are one or two words of explanation which I should give, for I know the direction in which your inquiries have run. It is true that I loved this lady, but from the day when she chose my friend McPherson my one desire was to help her to happiness. I was well content to stand aside and act as their go-between. Often I carried their messages, and it was because I was in their confidence and because she was so dear to me that I hastened to tell her of my friend's death, lest someone should forestall me in a more sudden and heartless manner. She would not tell you, sir, of our relations lest you should disapprove and I might suffer. But with your leave I must try to get back to The Gables, for my bed will be very welcome."

Stackhurst held out his hand. "Our nerves have all been at concert-pitch," said he. "Forgive what is past, Murdoch. We shall understand each other better in the future." They passed out together with their arms linked in friendly fashion. The Inspector remained, staring at me in silence with his ox-like eyes.

"Well, you've done it!" he cried at last. "I had read of you, but I never believed it. It's wonderful!"

I was forced to shake my head. To accept such praise was to lower one's own standards.

"I was slow at the outset—culpably slow. Had the body been found in the water I could hardly have missed it. It was the towel which misled me. The poor fellow had never thought to dry himself, and so I in turn was led to believe that he had never been in the water. Why, then, should the attack of any water creature suggest itself to me? That was where I went astray. Well, well, Inspector, I have often ventured to chaff you gentlemen of the police force, but *Cyanea Capillata* very nearly avenged Scotland Yard."

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COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by E. P. KINSELLA

IN writing "David Copperfield," Charles Dickens placed one more masterly novel upon the bookshelf of posterity. In this, as everyone knows, he created the most gentle and forthright character who ever lived in a book, coerced him to write the story of his life in the first person, and stood behind him to add to every one of his pages those exquisite touches of humour, kindness, and imagination which were his by right of genius.

Beginning with an account of his birth, David proceeded, in the leisurely style of those pre-mechanical days, to tell his well-known story of boyhood, work, and marriage, ambitions, sorrows, triumphs, disappointments, and his final happiness in a second marriage to the woman for whom he was born.

On his way to this he described the characters of the many odd, delightful, unpleasant, and dreadful people who came into his life. He dealt very tenderly with his mother, whom his great-aunt, Betsy Trotwood, described as "a wax doll," and who married the loathsome Mr. Murdstone, to her eternal grief.

He brought us into an affectionate regard for the Peggottys and little Em'ly, and the ark in which they lived; for the grumbling Mrs. Gummidge and the willing Barkis. He made us suffer the tortures of his schooldays in Salem House under the flute-playing Mr. Mell, where the handsome and dashing Steerforth awoke his hero-worship.

He made us feel as he did when his mother died, and when, aged ten, "a little labouring hind," he entered the office of Murdstone and Grinby, in the warehouse at Blackfriars. He made us laugh at the Micawbers and love Miss Betsy, to whom he ran for aid, and began a new and happier life with the friendship of the delicious Mr. Dick.

He made us creep with horror and loathing in the presence of the hypocritical Heep and fall in love with Agnes, the daughter of Mr. Wickfield, with whom he went to live. He made us thrill at his reunion with Steerforth and tremble when that all-too-good-looking, self-indulgent person fell in love with Em'ly.

We enjoyed with him all the excitements of London when, a man now, he was apprenticed to the law firm of Jorkins and Spenlow and met dear old Tommy Traddles. He made us share his anxiety over the decay of Mr. Wickfield, the loss of Miss Trotwood's money, and the gradual power of the 'umble Uriah Heep. But when he fell in love with the fairy-like Dora Spenlow, our thoughts went out to the faithful Agnes, whom he had then forgotten.

He made us cry with him and Ham when it was discovered that little Em'ly had run away with Steerforth and broken Peggotty's heart, and, later, suffer with him the pain and agony of an unhappy marriage which ended in the death of his pretty, frail wife. We shared his emotion at the finding of little Em'ly when Peggotty's dream came true after his long and faithful search, in the downfall of Heep, the drowning of the gay and careless Steerforth in the wreck off the coast at Yarmouth, and, after he had passed through the valley of the shadow, his return to peace of mind and Agnes and a new

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beginning with her. A glorious and wonderful book.

THE picture that came out of the Sausage Machine was called "Secret Love."

No one was in the least surprised to find that the name of Charles Dickens was not attached to it. There may have been a little disappointment on the part of those who had heard a faint rumour to the effect that it was founded on "David Copperfield" when they discovered that not only had David been quietly dropped, but that with him had gone Wilkins Micawber, Uriah Heep, Aunt Betsy Trotwood, Tommy Traddles, Mrs. Gummidge, Barkis, Mr. Wickfield, Agnes, and Mr. Dick.

It appeared that the young lady, who had graduated from a candy-shop to the position of chief scenario writer, had never heard of Dickens. Not Charles Dickens. The only Dickens known to her was the one to whom everybody was sent in moments of heated argument. In glancing over the book, it seemed to her, therefore, that the only movie stuff in the story, which appeared to be far too long, had to do with Steerforth and little Em'ly, although that had often been done before.

There did not seem to her to be the slightest value in the poignant drama in which Uriah Heep was concerned, any comedy to be wrung out of Micawber and his family, or any pathos in the gradual decline of the pretty Dora and her shaking curls, who meant so much to David. Nor could she see anything worth getting a wrinkle over in the charming and inspiring episodes in which Miss Trotwood played so large a part. In fact, it was generally agreed by the unit to which she was attached that most of the book was rot.

And so, in desperation, she was bound to concentrate upon everything that had to do with Peggotty, Ham, little Em'ly, and Steerforth. But as she could not see any chance for striking and elaborate sets or the outlay of a considerable sum of money in Peggotty's upturned barge, she decided immediately to place him upon a yacht almost as big as a liner, on which he lived, being very wealthy and eccentric, when he was not either at his country place in Pasadena or his town house in the Fifth Avenue end of the Hollywood lot.

This radical change enabled her to work in a large bevy of flappers of the flaming youth type, with their attendant beaux, a grey-haired society lady who could be quite properly employed as Mr. Peggotty's adviser on points of etiquette, and the usual number of butlers, without which no exhibitor dares to face his audience. As the name of Peggotty seemed to be rather an absurd one somehow suggesting antique furniture, she changed it to Madison D. Cortlandt, while that of Ham, which smacked somewhat unpleasantly of delicatessen shops, became Earl. He was to be one of those fine, big, simple, honest young men who wore trousers that flapped over his shoes and put nothing wet on his hair. The hero, in fact. James Steerforth seemed good enough to stand as the name of the villain, but, of course, little Em'ly would not do at all. It was far too homely. And so she became Bernice.

After the usual declaration of independence and the proclamation of the numerous names that were concerned in the making of the picture, it began with a scene on the sumptuous yacht, the interior of which was a cross between that of the *Majestic*, the *Aquitania*, and the *Leviathan*. It had, that is to say, not only one foyer but three. The first was authentically Tudor, the second recognizably de Medicis, and the third charmingly done in the Plaza period with a touch of the Vanderbilt. There were also Louis XIV. suites, Nell Gwynne suites, Renaissance suites, Georgian suites, early American suites, and one or two in which the imagination of the chief decorator ran completely amuck. And there were, of course, a

Peggotty's home, as drawn by Dickens's first illustrator.

gymnasium, a swimming tank, a ballroom, and several other rooms in which at least a thousand people were able to move about with the most perfect ease.

The picture begins with a fairly quiet tea on the yacht. We learn at once that Bernice is having a birthday, and that she has been adopted by Mr. Madison D. Cortlandt at an early age in one of his few moments of sentimentality. We gather that she is the daughter of a man who has been crushed out of business by Mr. Cortlandt in the ordinary way of financial strategy, and that

A tea-party à la Hollywood in Peggotty's American home.
Bernice & Earl (Little Em'ly & Ham) are shown in the foreground.

he and his wife had died under the blow. The little orphan was taken over and sent to school. And as his numerous millions were not able to provide

Mr. Cortlandt with a daughter of his own and he has remained a widower after the death of his wife, he is very glad to have Bernice about the yacht. She is a very charming girl, and it is therefore no wonder that Earl, the only son of his father, should be deeply and tremendously in love with her.

Being a good boy and a hero, he is a cashier in his father's bank, and gets aboard a little late after his day's work. Not too late, however, to see flaming youth enjoy itself. He draws Bernice aside. She is completely exhausted from having gone through the hard gymnastics of the Charleston, but is nevertheless in high spirits. He gives her a birthday present in the form of a fairly cheap diamond bangle, screws up his courage, and asks her to be his wife. She is just about to say "Yes," being very fond of Earl, when we see her catch her breath at the sight of Steerforth, who has just come aboard to fetch his little sister and have a look at the yacht, which for some incomprehensible reason seems to amuse him very much.

A "close-up" of Steerforth giving Bernice one of those dangerous looks through his seductive curly lashes.

Instantly, therefore, a sense of palpitating interest is introduced into the picture. We know by the simple fact that Steerforth wears white spats that he has villainous intentions and is not to be trusted. He gives Bernice, to whom he has not yet been introduced, one of those long and dangerous looks through his seductive curly lashes, and without giving a definite answer to the forthright Earl, Bernice is drawn towards the intruder like a needle to a magnet. Earl immediately provides against a social breach by introducing Steerforth, and a title informs us that they are college friends. More than that. Earl has an immense admiration for Steerforth, and admires him not only for his physical prowess but because of his mental daring, which is exemplified, he thinks, in the fact that Steerforth wears white spats even with a dinner-jacket. This seems to him to prove the possession of immense strength of mind. It is a case of hero worship.

Steerforth wears white spats even with a dinner-jacket!

Steerforth immediately proceeds to use his wiles on Bernice, and being a well-known dance hound he conducts her over several hundred yards of the yacht to the place where the jazz band is still at work. Exhausted as she is, Bernice joins him in a vivid and astonishing exhibition of the Charleston, leaving poor Earl in a very depressed condition with the empty jeweller's box and a sense of loneliness.

We are then introduced to Madison D. Cortlandt, who, although no farther on in life than the middle fifties, is played by an actor who looks at least sixty-nine years old. This subtle piece of casting is to show us that life has its compensations and that millionaires must pay a heavy price for the collection of great wealth. And here follows a very dramatic moment. Cortlandt has never before seen Steerforth. He is not in the habit of haunting cabarets. He is, however, a man of supreme psychological intuition, and, taking an instant dislike to the bespatted jazz fiend, stalks into the middle of the ballroom and orders him off the yacht.

In one fell swoop, therefore, he puts into Bernice's mind the natural desire to see as

Charles Dickens's Peggotty.

much of Steerforth as she can in the future by all sorts of stealthy means. Prohibition always has exactly the opposite effect from the one which it intends to pursue. And when, after a small dinner party that night, consisting of sixty or seventy guests, Earl again proposes to Bernice, he is refused. The title as well as the picture shows us that the deadly poison of Steerforth's googoo has begun to do its work.

And now we begin to see the extreme excellence of the scenario writer's scheme. The best friend of the admirable hero has made up his mind to exert his seductive methods with the little heroine, and the man who is both the father of the hero and the guardian of the little heroine is throwing her, by his mistaken efforts, slap into the villain's arms. This is Drama! This is Life! And, better still, this is Pictures!

We are shown Steerforth's rooms in New York. They are very choice. A couple of butlers always welcome him and bow profoundly when they take his hat and stick. He is evidently a man who gets a pretty fair income from someone, because his flat consists not only of a very large studio-sitting-room, but a library, a drawing-room, a music-room, and a little ballroom as large as that of the Plaza. The snug bedroom, of which we get one or two peeps, might be that, perhaps, of one of the few reigning kings. It is a triumph of interior decoration.

Many orgies are held here, and even at five o'clock in the afternoon or thereabouts, daylight saving time, young women in need of exercise compete in giving imitations of the Moscow Theatre Ballet. There seems to be a permanent jazz band employed. Also there are palpably other stills than those in the studio. It is all very true to life.

Steerforth, undismayed by Mr. Cortlandt's embargo, makes a hobby of getting aboard the yacht to meet the fluttering and distracted Bernice and whisper his subtle poison in her ears. And in order to do so he disguises himself in many ingenious ways. He takes off his spats, for instance, he parts his hair in the middle, and once he even goes to the great length of wearing a monocle.

Things look very bad. You see, Bernice has hitherto been accustomed only to forthright men, and the other sort come as a great and exciting change. We are very worried about her, especially when we notice

The American Peggotty.

that she falters in the Charleston and loses her snap and vim.

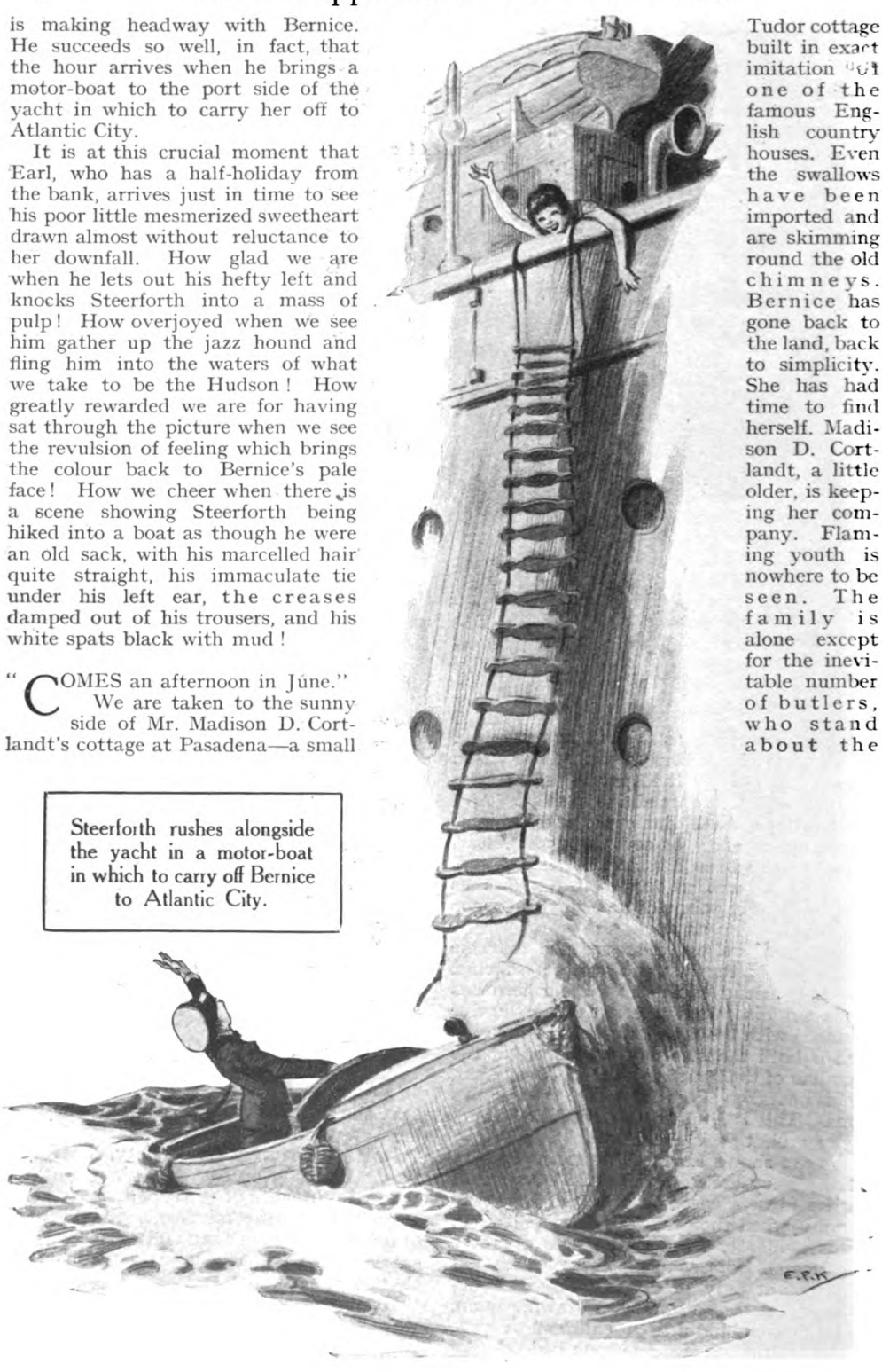
Notwithstanding his anxiety, Earl continues to carry on his exemplary work at the bank, in spite of the fact that he could so easily follow the universally desired career of being a rich man's son and do nothing but enjoy himself. He is a very inspiring character.

Excitement grows almost too intense when we see that Steerforth, who has no idea whatever of giving any girl a little gold ring,

is making headway with Bernice. He succeeds so well, in fact, that the hour arrives when he brings a motor-boat to the port side of the yacht in which to carry her off to Atlantic City.

It is at this crucial moment that Earl, who has a half-holiday from the bank, arrives just in time to see his poor little mesmerized sweetheart drawn almost without reluctance to her downfall. How glad we are when he lets out his hefty left and knocks Steerforth into a mass of pulp! How overjoyed when we see him gather up the jazz hound and fling him into the waters of what we take to be the Hudson! How greatly rewarded we are for having sat through the picture when we see the revulsion of feeling which brings the colour back to Bernice's pale face! How we cheer when there is a scene showing Steerforth being hiked into a boat as though he were an old sack, with his marcelled hair quite straight, his immaculate tie under his left ear, the creases damped out of his trousers, and his white spats black with mud!

"COMES an afternoon in June." We are taken to the sunny side of Mr. Madison D. Cortlandt's cottage at Pasadena—a small Tudor cottage built in exact imitation of one of the famous English country houses. Even the swallows have been imported and are skimming round the old chimneys. Bernice has gone back to the land, back to simplicity. She has had time to find herself. Madison D. Cortlandt, a little older, is keeping her company. Flaming youth is nowhere to be seen. The family is alone except for the inevitable number of butlers, who stand about the



Steerforth rushes alongside the yacht in a motor-boat in which to carry off Bernice to Atlantic City.

lofty rooms doing nothing with their ... ial gracefulness.

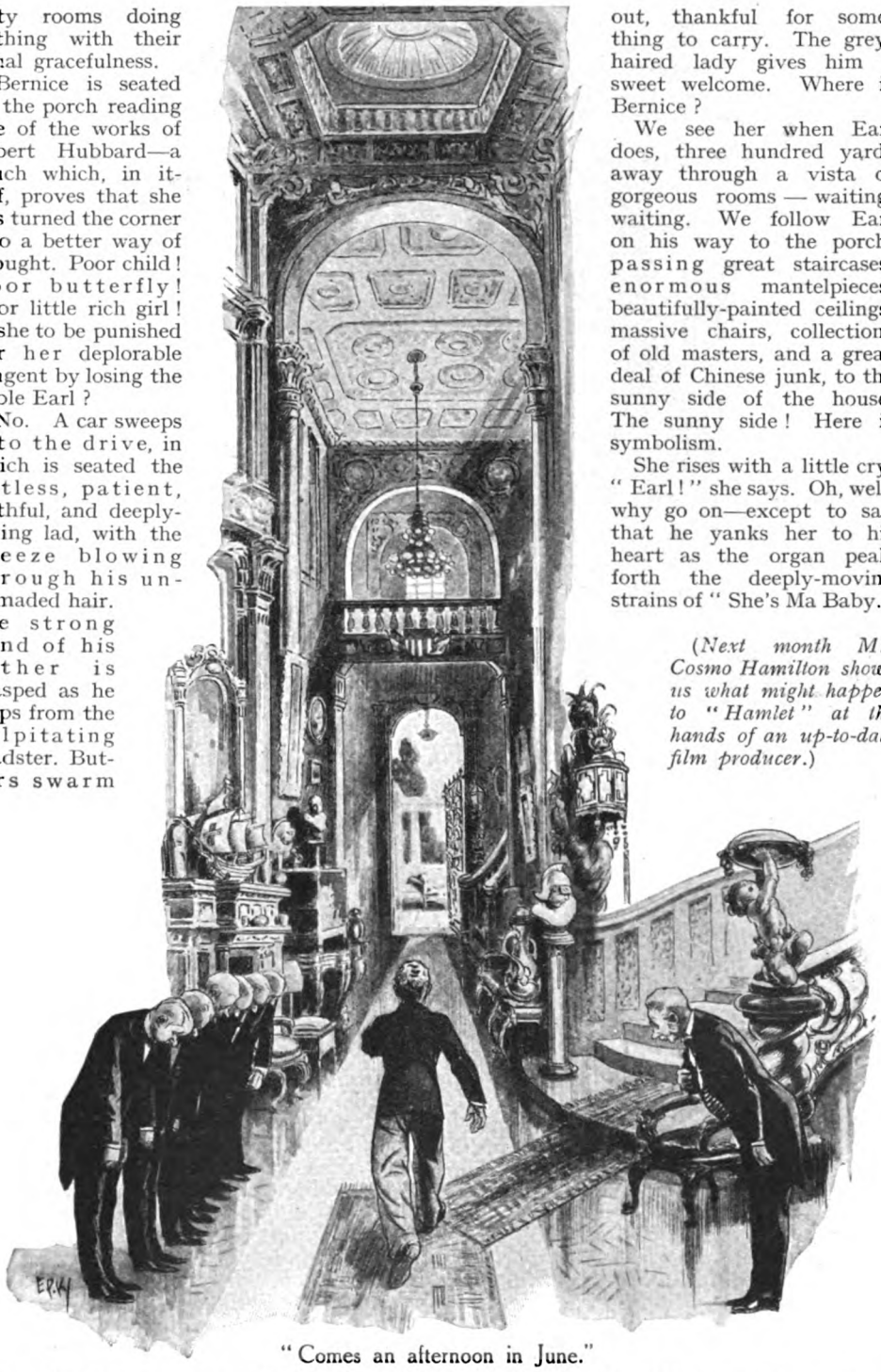
Bernice is seated on the porch reading one of the works of Elbert Hubbard—a touch which, in itself, proves that she has turned the corner into a better way of thought. Poor child! Poor butterfly! Poor little rich girl! Is she to be punished for her deplorable tangent by losing the noble Earl?

No. A car sweeps into the drive, in which is seated the hatless, patient, faithful, and deeply-loving lad, with the breeze blowing through his unpomaded hair. The strong hand of his father is grasped as he leaps from the palpitating roadster. Butlers swarm out, thankful for something to carry. The grey-haired lady gives him a sweet welcome. Where is Bernice?

We see her when Earl does, three hundred yards away through a vista of gorgeous rooms — waiting, waiting. We follow Earl on his way to the porch, passing great staircases, enormous mantelpieces, beautifully-painted ceilings, massive chairs, collections of old masters, and a great deal of Chinese junk, to the sunny side of the house. The sunny side! Here is symbolism.

She rises with a little cry. "Earl!" she says. Oh, well, why go on—except to say that he yanks her to his heart as the organ peals forth the deeply-moving strains of "She's Ma Baby."

(Next month Mr. Cosmo Hamilton shows us what might happen to "Hamlet" at the hands of an up-to-date film producer.)



"Comes an afternoon in June."

In the closing scene we see Earl as he rushes to meet the waiting Bernice on the porch of the cottage at Pasadena.

"RODNEY DARLING"

Being the result of espionage into the experiences, adventures, and secret soul of any small boy of seven, together with certain illustrations of the laws governing self-preservation.

COLLECTED, OBSERVED, AND DESCRIBED BY

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrated by
C. E. BROCK, R.I.

AT six-thirty a.m. Rodney* sat up in bed and examined yesterday's scars in a slant of early sunshine, and saw that they had grown brown knobs in the night.

By royal command of parents Rodney was forbidden to get up until seven o'clock, but the more insistent commands of youth decreed otherwise. Picking up the loud-ticking alarm clock from the chair beside the bed, Rodney moved the hands into the required position, closed his eyes, opened them again, and lo! it was time to get up.

" Oo—Oo—Oo! " he sang in the high treble of childhood.

A locomotive entering a tunnel and a small boy entering upon a new day make much the same noise.

From the adjoining room Rodney's father, rudely awakened, hammered on the partition wall and shouted :—

" Stop that row! "

Rodney emitted one more " Oo "—a little one—to prove independence, and attacked the business of dressing. With an hour's start over the earliest of the grown-up contingent the need to wash did not assert itself.

* *Author's Note.*—The Author wishes to state that the name Rodney may be freely changed should parents so desire.

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Rodney's father had views about washing —tiresome views of boys stripped to the waist, soaping vigorously and splashing their limbs with cold water. Rodney had promised always to wash in that way, but since his father was almost certain to have fallen asleep again there was a good case against fulfilment. However, to be on the safe side he crossed to the bathroom, ran a tap, and splashed about with a back-brush.

With his free hand he put on a pair of stockings with large holes in the toes and heels (which was forbidden) and some shoes which were not a pair. Returning to his bedroom, Rodney fetched his cap from under the bed and, pushing open the casement, threw it at a starling who was sitting in a rain-gutter.

The starling flew away, but the cap remained in the rain-gutter—for ever. As Rodney pulled on his shirt and undervest in one—and his pants and breeks in one (which on hygienic grounds was forbidden) —he decided that the true explanation of the loss of the cap was that some boy had dropped it down a well. A " mos' enormous " boy had done this ; practically a giant—and mad at that.

Rodney did not brush his hair, according to rule, as who should say, half an hour later, hair being what it is, that he had failed to do so ?

As he tiptoed towards the stairhead he had the ill-luck to kick one of his father's brogues, which behaved noisily.

His mother's voice was lifted to inquire :—

" Have you brushed your teeth, Rodney darling ? "

" Yes, Mum," he called back, which was true, as in the course of a long life seldom a day passed with this duty neglected.

A moment later Rodney was free of the garden.

THE garden gleamed with silver, pearl, and grey, for the dairymaids of dawn had not yet completed their task of skimming the dew from the grass.

Rodney shuffled across the lawn, leaving a wake of Friday's footsteps for Crusoe to find.

He was glad to get his feet wet before anyone could stop him. That kind of being wet is much nicer than soap and water wet. It is almost as good as paddling. The dew between his toes made squelching noises very pleasant to hear.

The advantage of being up before the rest of the house lies in immunity from restraints of all kinds. In that hour of freedom forbidden doors are open and forbidden practices flourish.

Rodney waded round to the garage, rolled in through an open window, and turned on the head-lights of his father's car. These, after ten minutes pleasantly spent basking in their rays, he left burning. It was better so, for, in Rodney's hearing, his father had complained that the batteries were very low. A little judicious expenditure of current would mean that his father would have to swing the engine—a practice he disliked above all others, but which afforded to the watcher and the listener much delight and education.

Returning to the house Rodney made his way to that holy of holies, the gun-room, where are to be found and explored more forbidden mysteries than elsewhere. Rodney desired to satisfy himself whether or not he could put together a twelve-bore gun. The answer was in the negative. In making the attempt the gun bit him. Dropping the barrels upon the stone floor, Rodney executed a nimble but agonized fandango. Prudence demanded that this should be performed in silence, despite the fact that blood and loose skin were involved. As, on some future date, a fresh attempt upon the gun was indicated, Rodney had no choice but to postpone the noisier side of lamentation. Had the wound been of a more serious character he might have declared his fault and so have organized his grief as to persuade sympathy to outweigh reproof.

But Rodney was no fool. He could assess the emotional value of cut or bruise or graze to a nicety. Wrapping his injured thumb with a piece of oily rag, he put back the gun in its case and, taking his father's dry-fly rod from the rack, returned to the garden and marched off to that side of the house where was a blank ivy-clad wall much affected by building sparrows.

Unhappily, the lowest nest was beyond reach of the point of the rod, and what might have been an illuminating ornithological investigation came to nothing at all.

On running back to the gun-room the restless rod point stuck in the ground, and before Rodney could stop himself nine feet of tapering split cane arched perilously. But beyond a slight fracture at the extreme tip the damage done was not worth mentioning— or at any rate it was not worth Rodney's while to mention.

Here was no deceit but good common sense, for fathers are apt to attach too much importance to trifling misadventures, and should be supplied with as little material as possible for developing this fault.

Rodney's offer to carry the milk-can from the float to the back door did not result in the loss of more than a pint. Rodney's mind was eager of enlightenment, and only a day or two before someone, in his hearing, had told of the mysteries of centrifugal force. Rodney wished to put these claims to the

proof and satisfy himself whether a full measure could be swung round and round over one's head without a drop being spilt. He was highly shocked that a grown-up—one of those persons who expect rigid truthfulness from the young—could have been guilty of circulating such a baseless and unwarrantable rumour. However, as Rodney was well aware, there is a proverb deprecating all show of emotion over milk casualties, and in the event of questions as to shortage being asked he felt himself armed with the perfect answer.

The minutes run swiftly when there is no one about to interfere with the manner in which they are spent. It seemed no time at all before the ringing of the breakfast bell.

Responding to appetite, Rodney forgot all about turning off the car's headlights.

"Rodney *dar*ling," his mother said. "Oh, Rodney, you are in a pickle! *And* your shoes! Upstairs and change them. Quick as lightning."

Rodney said "Oh, I don't have to," three times before complying. This was a point of personal honour.

On the half-landing he met his father, who looked as if he might be difficult. But Rodney's father only said:—

"Brush your hair," and went on down.

An accomplished hair-brusher can, with average luck, contrive one lick of smooth hair without disturbing the pleasant disorder underneath. Also he can manage three or more partings. Rodney's appearance when he came to table presented a thin veneer of tidiness and cleanliness—just sufficient, in fact, to pass muster—but no more.

His father's appraising eye, although square-lidded with a conventional frown, did not conceal a gleam of tolerant good-humour.

"Dirty little tyke," he mumbled, and returned to the perusal of a propped-up newspaper.

Rodney made a lower-lip at his mother.

A lower-lip signifies "'Tisn't fair, Mum. Is it fair?"

His mother said:—

"You look lovely, darling." Then: "You are a bear, Jack. He's only a little boy."

"All right—all right," said Rodney's father, but without ill-humour.

Rodney attacked his Breakfast Crisps, brown breadcrumby-looking things with cold milk over them. These he shared impartially with his shirt front, the carpet, the table-cloth, and the facial scenery adjoining his mouth.

As there seemed to be no likelihood of conversation, Rodney embellished what otherwise would have been a dangerous silence with loud sploshy noises and a fine clatter with his spoon.

Presently his father picked up his cue:—

"Must you eat like a pig?"

And his mother hers:—

"Jack, you can't notice everything."

"Damn it," said his father, "one can't notice anything else."

"Don't swear in front of Rodney. I will not have it."

"And I will not have the boy behaving like——"

"They are off," said Rodney to himself, and while his parents completed the course he devoured his egg and painted the neighbourhood with black currant jam unobserved.

"Say your grace, darling," said his mother in her hurt voice.

So Rodney shut his eyes and thought nothing at all for a quarter of a second, then bolted.

THIS business of meals was a great tribulation. Standing in the sunlight wondering what he would do next, Rodney reflected that grown-ups are harder to handle at table than anywhere else. However, one must eat.

A lusty voice called upon him to return and fold his napkin "properly." Rodney moved out of earshot like a ghost. Under cover of the laurels he licked his lips. They tasted pleasantly sweet—reminiscently flavoursome. It is folly to use a napkin—folly and waste of good food. A napkin is an obstinate piece of furniture which refuses to be folded in its own creases. Under the table is the proper place for a napkin. Once there it affords an opportunity for a nice grovel during a meal. Feet look awfully funny without any bodies to them. Perhaps after all the napkin is a friend in disguise. Who knows?

Beyond the laurel screen was the lane, and along the lane a little girl was walking. As she walked she sang for pleasure of the sun.

Rodney knew she was a little girl because she did not sing words or any known tune. She sang "Oo Oo Oo" like other children.

Rodney was moved to cry out:—

"Shut up, fat fool!"

The little girl threw a flint over the hedge and went her ways.

Witnessing the enormous size of the flint, terror seized Rodney. In imagination he envisaged the disastrous results to himself had he been struck by such a missile. The peril had passed, but it called for advertisement.

Picking up the flint, Rodney rushed with it houseward in panic.

" Oo, Mum, Oo ! " he cried.

His father, brows knit, black-avised, came forth from the garage. His face shone with sweat. He was holding the starting handle.

" Rodney ! "

" Oo, Mum ! " cried Rodney, for he had remembered.

" RODNEY ! "

Useless to ignore that tone. The main line was blocked.

" Come you here," said the voice, inexorably.

" Oo ! Dad ! Look ! Oo ! "

He held the flint aloft.

" Never mind that. You've been messing about with my lights——"

" A great man——" Rodney began.

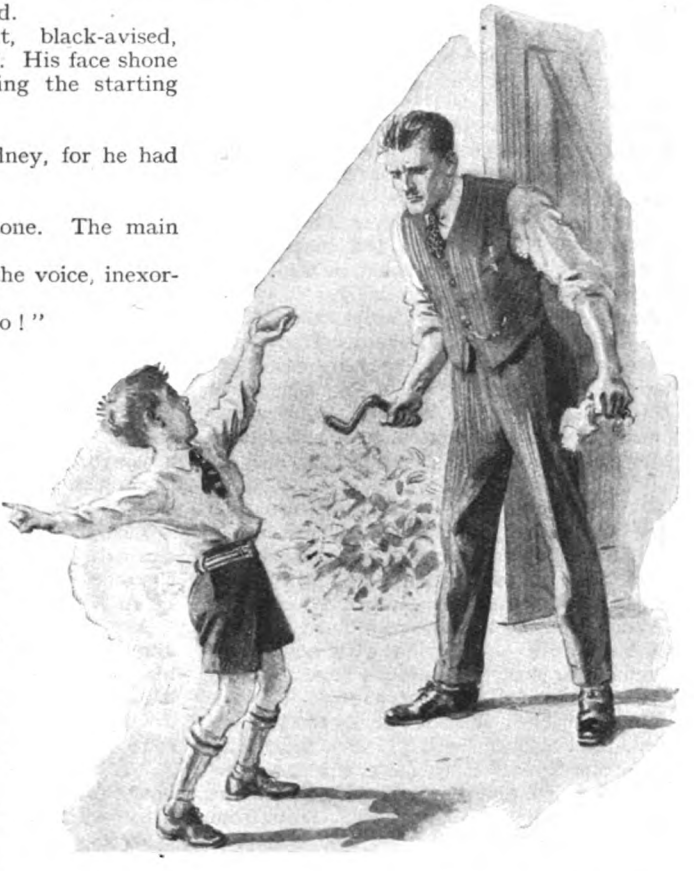
" Now listen to me, you young devil——"

It was touch and go. Rodney employed the past terror to illustrate the present.

" A great man frew it at me," he shrieked.

" What's this ? " cried Rodney's father. " What do you say ? Chucked that flint ? Where is he ? —who was he—— ? "

Like a streak of lightning he was out through the garden gate. The switch had worked. The limited express was shunted on to a siding—the main line was clear. Rodney vanished into the landscape.



He held the flint aloft. " A great man frew it at me," he shrieked.

He did not emerge until he heard the sound of his father's car chugging up the hill that led away from the house.

With so great a triumph scored, something in the way of celebration was indicated, and, searching his brain for an effective avenue for rejoicing, Rodney found it lay in the cesspool.

As a result of seven years' diligent inquiry, with the exception of the cesspool there was not a single unexplored department of the garden. In consequence the cesspool had assumed a larger importance in his mind than its functions of usefulness or architectural beauties justified. Several times he had tried to raise the iron trap, but rust and moss and the deposits of time had defeated the powers at his disposal. However, a day or two before, strange men, working secretly by night, had fitted a new trap which seemed to offer better chances of success than its predecessor.

The cesspool was situated some little distance from the house in the centre of a dark overgrown path with a rubbish heap at the far end, where, with a little trouble in the matter of sorting, " quite good things " were to be found. The path itself was slimy, mildewed, and rather shameful. Although to the young idea its charms were apparent at a glance, grown-up persons showed themselves curiously indifferent to its appeal. Here, at early morning, would come the cook with refuse of ashes and peelings to cast upon the rubbish heap, but, save by the cook, the path to the cesspool was unfrequented—was a sanctuary.

With what pride Rodney surveyed his handiwork, when, after ten minutes' passionate endeavour, he succeeded in dragging the iron trap from its frame and towing it into the adjoining bushes !

Beneath him lay a yawning chasm, black and ominous—a bottomless pit where waters glugged and chuckled. Far below a pattern of leaves and sky and the dark shadow

of his head were mirrored on the oily surface.

"Oo!" exclaimed Rodney.

The sound of his voice reverberated dismally.

What an idea this had been—what a place it was—what an experience! Never before had he designed and carried out a more enchanting exploit.

For long minutes on knees and elbows he lingered, looking into the black heart of this *oubliette* and breathing in the subtle odours of adventure.

And then, quite suddenly, the whole business lost interest for him. Impossible to say why its charms so speedily vanished. Yet so it was. Maybe that restlessness of blood and muscle which in the young commands constant movement rebelled at an entertainment of such idle character.

TWO minutes later Rodney was riding his fairy cycle round and round the house—through perilous byways, across the lawn, and up and down the multifarious paths that threaded the garden.

When Rodney rode he rode hard and did not stop until he collided with something or fell off, or shared Absalom's fate.

It was a race with disaster for goal.

On the brick pavement outside the kitchen he skidded and crashed. He fell light, and as no one appeared to have witnessed his fall he decided against tears. He was about to remount when a voice addressed him from an upper window.

"'Ave you 'urt yourself, Rodney?"

It was Emmie, the under housemaid, a soft-hearted maiden still young enough to squander portions of her meagre wage on cheap confectionery.

Hearing the voice Rodney realized at once that he was in pain—severe pain—nigh unto death, in fact. His stomach, trained to sympathetic accordances, signified an immediate desire for chocolate.

"Mmmmm," moaned Rodney. "MMMM!"

It was a thin moan, but he knew well that silent tears, because they are not nearly so aggravating, touch the heart more swiftly than the roaring kind.

While Emma clattered down the back stairs, Rodney made a swift examination of his knees for possible injuries. Chance favoured him. One of yesterday's scars had lost its umbrella, and was bleeding satisfactorily. In these happy circumstances there would be no need to wait for Emmie. It was a hospital case, demanding maternal care—warm water—a nice white bandage—soothing words—a caress—two minutes' convalescence, and one or more caramels.

Casualties were so common in the household that it was unreasonable to suppose his mother would detect the difference between an injury of yesterday's or to-day's vintage.

To attract her attention it became necessary somewhat to increase the volume of his grief. There is a proper code in cases of injury. The injured must not hasten for relief, but must so contrive that motherly ears are given the chance to hear from afar his slow and agonized approach. Then will the affrighted mother rush forth to acquaint herself with the disastrous tidings. After that the case can safely be left in her hands.

As usual, Rodney's mother carried out her part to perfection. She was so nice about it that it seemed almost, but not quite, a shame to deceive her.

His jaws pleasantly locked by a caramel, and with another in the pocket of his knickers, Rodney set off in search of fresh adventures.

Mounting the fairy cycle he rode gallantly away.

Past the back of the garage he pedalled—through the "arterial road" among the rhododendrons, and thence into Rubbish Heap Alley.

A pigeon crashed through the branches above. Still fast pedalling, Rodney raised his head to mark its flight. It looked so handsome he wished he could kill it. Already in his own mind he had killed it—pierced it to the heart with an arrow.

"But it fell among the bushes and I never found it, Mum. I was going to give it to you for a little pie."

So might the story run. Risky, perhaps, since his skill as an archer was not yet proved, but——

Something had gone terribly wrong. The earth's crust was broken and Rodney was catapulting—somersaulting through empty air. A wild rose put forth briers to meet him—envelop him—submerge him.

Rodney's next view of the world was upside down—an inverted glimpse through an archway formed by a pair of chubby legs. Everything was strangely clear and surprising. It was as though the hundred thorns into which he had fallen had spurred his eyesight to keener vision.

Before him stretched the path to the rubbish heap and in its centre yawned the black mouth of the cesspool. His mount—the racer chaser fairy bike—had vanished utterly.

So bewildering a thing was this that Rodney extricated himself from his surroundings and crawled forth with never a thought of the prickly vines that pierced and tore his flesh.

Unless someone was about Rodney was stoically indifferent to accidents of any kind He and pain were too well acquainted for aught but the barest acknowledgments.

Besides, something had happened of such magnitude that to give it second place to a mere physical sensation was out of the question.

As Rodney crawled he stared to right and left, but there was no sign of the fairy bike. It was gone completely, and there was only one place it could have gone —underground.

With eyes abulge Rodney peered down the hole, and fear was transformed to certainty. The sluggish waters below, moved to activity by a sudden disturbance, lapped restlessly against the encircling walls.

At one spot a silvery gleam fretted the sullen surface. The gleam was part of a handle-bar.

For longer than he had ever kept still before Rodney stared and stared. He felt as though the greatest catastrophe known to man had befallen. An awful, unbelievable, untellable, unremediable misfortune. For could he go to his parents and say : " Lo ! the gift you gave me reposes in the bosom of a sewer " ? It was apparent to the meanest intelligence he could not speak these words, nor any like them. For a variety of reasons was this so. It would not be easy to explain how the lid came to be removed from the frame—or why, having removed it, he had failed to put it back again. He knew without being told that he had been guilty of a major indiscretion which, once possessed of the facts, a grown-up would never cease to expatiate upon.

" Think what you would have felt, Rodney, if I had walked down that path and never been heard of again ! " Or if cookie had fallen in ! There would be no end to the affair. To the lecturer its possibilities for development were limitless. It would last for years.

On the brick pavement outside the kitchen he skidded and crashed.

His one chance of safety lay in concealment. The affair must be covered up.

His face rigid with determination, Rodney set about entombing his fairy cycle for all time. It was his first experience of a burial, and as the lid fell with a clang into its slot a lump rose in Rodney's throat and his eyes pricked awfully badly.

" Oh, dear ! Ooo ! " he whimpered.

A spirit must have prompted him to frame the short prayer.

" God bless my fairy bike—God bless the four wheel-brakes and the hooter and the saddle, please, and both wheels and——"

The rest was lost in tears that perhaps for the first time were not shed in self-pity. But out of the bitterness of his grief was born compensation. Alone in Rubbish Heap Alley, Rodney perceived that his unfathomable woe was embroidered with a silver lining.

Every small boy of his acquaintance owned a fairy bike, and most small girls, too—and these fairy bikes encumbered halls and passages, or lay on garage floors to be sworn at by infuriated car-drivers for not being put in the right place—or acted as trip wires on garden paths throughout the length and breadth of the country. A fairy bike was Youth's commonest possession. One did not even bother to show it to one's friends. But was there a small boy, or girl, in all the land who could boast that he had a fairy bike at the bottom of a cesspool ? No. Fame had been spewed from the jaws of adversity. Wherefore rejoice — wherefore rejoice !

When a voice called, summoning Rodney to wash and prepare for dinner, he came hot-foot—light-foot and in song.

" Oo-oo-oo-oo !—Oo-oo-oo-oo ! "

Like a peal of bells.

Yes, and he ate his lamb and strewed his peas upon the floor with a right good will, and when it came to the pudding (" What pudding is it going to be, Mum ? " " You'll see when it comes ") he had three helpings and made a lower-lip when a fourth was denied him.

The meal over he made his customary inquiry :—

" Need I have a rest to-day ? "

And received the customary answer :—

" Of course you'll have your rest."

" May I have it in the bathroom ? "

" Certainly not."

" In Emmie's bedroom, then ? "

" You'll have it in your own room, Rodney."

" I don't want to have it in my own room."

" Why not ? "

" 'Cos a frog tried to break the window there."

" Rodney, how can you tell such foolish lies ! "

How could he ? The trouble was to prevent himself. Besides, it wasn't a lie—it was an idea. Why shouldn't a frog break a window ? With those great jumps. He—Rodney—nearly always broke things when he jumped. Then why not a frog ? Is a frog more cautious—a wiser beast than a boy ? No—for they a-wooing go, with a hey-nonny-nonny, which isn't at all sensible.

" Now run along," said his mother.

" He did try, 'cos I saw him," Rodney persisted over his shoulder.

ON the half-landing Rodney met a box of matches which addressed him, civilly enough, in Swedish and suggested a partnership.

Rodney accepted the proposal in the spirit in which it was offered and accommodated his Swedish friend in his shirt pocket. An unfortunate experience in the past had convinced him that pyrotechnics in the home were unpopular. It became necessary, therefore, to postpone developing the partnership until later. This virtuous resolve was harder to maintain than he had anticipated, since, during the course of his rest, Rodney succeeded in detaching a strip of wallpaper which, once adrift, would have been better burnt.

A voice announcing his release came before temptation proved too strong.

Rodney clattered downstairs like a giant refreshed.

As he passed through the sitting-hall his mother, who was at her table, addressed him without looking up.

" Darling, in about ten minutes I want you to hop on your bike and run these letters to the post."

By no means, thought Rodney — on ordinary days, by no means—but this day, by no means whatsoever.

" Did you hear me, darling ? "

Apparently not.

Rodney's mother went on writing.

" It's *so* rude not to answer, darling."

It was amazing how quietly Rodney could move except when told not to make a row. He passed out like a mouse. It hadn't been very nice of his mother to speak of the fairy bike. Already the novelty of parking it at the bottom of the cesspool was wearing off and sensations of bereavement were returning. It hadn't been nice of her at all. Of course she didn't know. But mothers are supposed to know things—certain things—tragic things. They should guess them—and forgive.

Rodney drifted through the open door of an outhouse where was a litter of straw, shavings, and broken packing-cases.

Cookie, Chase, the parlourmaid, and Emmie rushed forth with pails, which were quickly filled.

In his more serious moments he favoured the wood shed above all other places. Its reckless disorder was human and understandable.

The cobwebs on the window-panes clouded vision of the world without. Through such a window one could see what one chose. A very human place.

Taking the match-box from his pocket, Rodney struck a match and held it above his head. To explain the action he said, aloud :—

" I am a man with a torch."

But the torch turned against the man and burnt his fingers. Wherefore the man dropped the torch, which fell among a heap of straw bottle-jackets, which flared into flame like cordite.

" Ooh ! " yelled Rodney—raced across the yard and beat his fists against the back door. " Fi-er ! Fi-er ! "

For once in his life an emergency had arisen which took precedence over personal precaution.

Cookie, Chase, the parlourmaid, and Emmie rushed forth with pails, which were quickly filled. Rodney's mother came running.

" It's here," she cried. " Quickly ! "

Swish ! went the water. The flames licked upward and flickered out under a pall of acrid smoke.

The peril was averted.

" Well ! " said cookie, " how could it have happened ? "

And then Rodney realized his danger.

" I don't know how it could," said he, and, observing that his mother's eyes were upon him, he added, injudiciously :—

" *I* didn't do it."

Rodney's mother addressed the maids.

" It's all right now," she said.

They returned to the house.

Then Rodney's mother addressed Rodney, saying :—

" Things don't catch fire by themselves, darling."

" Oh, don't they ? " said Rodney, but his nerve had been shaken, and the simplicity in which lies the essence of success in such a remark as that was absent. Rodney's tone-perfect ear detected in his own words a note of guile.

His mother's eyes were steadfast.

" Wasn't it lucky I was passing by ? " he asked.

His mother gave an outward breath and her head went from side to side.

" Rodney—Rodney ! " she said.

Somehow he would have to escape those

relentless eyes. He saw something at his feet that called for instant comment.

"Mum, why does one have bootlaces?"

"Rodney, have you been burning matches?"

The direct question—the thing of all others most to be feared. He called upon the gods of childhood to save him and they answered. So brilliant was the inspiration that he could not find words quickly enough.

"Oo, Mum—last night—do you know what? Oo! I was looking frew my window and I saw a glow-worm wriggling into the wood shed. Oo! he was fiery!"

"Did you indeed?" she answered in a level and most unsatisfactory voice. "You must tell that to Daddy when he comes home."

It wasn't fair. It was cheating. One can't be expected to convince the whole world.

"I'm not going to," said Rodney, with determination. "Daddy's horrid to make believe."

"If you told him the truth he'd believe you."

Yes, he would. Any grown-up would. Adoration of the truth is the hatefullest thing about them. And what is there in the truth to recommend itself? Nothing at all. Truth is only a trick, a convention, a low-down sneaky method of trapping children into giving themselves away. There is no sense in doing that—in looking for trouble. Grown-ups put bars to nursery windows to prevent their children from falling out. They take their hands when crossing a road and protect them from danger in a multitude of ways, but let the child protect himself with the only weapon at his disposal—imagination—and the balloon goes up. They protest that there would be no row or punishment if the child were to step up and honestly declare the sins he has committed. But it is against human nature to confess oneself an ass.

"You may have observed that the Waterford bowl in the dining-room is smashed into atoms. Allow me, sir, to inform you that the responsibility for this distressing mishap is mine alone."

It is absurd to pretend that the matter ends there without rebuke. It does not. Once Rodney had made the Washington experiment and his father cried out in wrath:—

"Clumsy little devil. You talk as if you had done something clever."

Clever? There is no cleverness in truth. It is the resort of the fool—the half-wit—the child without imagination.

Come what might, Rodney decided he would have to brazen it out. No other course was open to him.

THEN he found his mother had taken him by the hand and together they were moving towards the house of the Third Degree. Presently he found himself sitting on her lap in a great arm-chair with her arms about him.

Rodney did not attempt to struggle. He knew that before him was an ordeal which would demand all his strength and ingenuity. It would be useless to waste it in other directions.

Low and softly she began to talk.

It was the old formula.

"Think what would have happened——"

A picture of a house in flames—one of those vivid word-paintings with which grown-ups torture the imaginations of the young. Rodney felt its toils stealing—stealing around him. He moved uneasily. Something would have to be done, or sure as sure he would give himself away. The glittering diamond arrow on her breast was piercing his defences. With a deft inspiration he tried to switch the horrible example of what might have happened into channels of fiction.

"And did the fire-engine come, Mum?"

But Rodney's mother was wise—she bore on relentlessly. Unchecked, the fire crept on towards a nursery in which children were asleep.

Then Rodney screamed—struggled free, and grasping the thumb of one hand in the palm of another hopped in increasing circles round and round the room.

"Your pin, Oo! Your horrid pin! You pricked me on purpose. Aaaah! Mmmmmm!"

He had her there—had her on the run towards him.

"Darling! It's your own fault—show me—show me at once."

"No, oh! Ooo! it hurts. Did it on purpose. Mmmm! And you did know I'd lost my fairy bike all the time. You did."

"Lost your——? Rodney, come here. What do you mean?"

But it was too soon for explanations. To hurry matters at that stage would mean an inevitable return to the fires of martyrdom.

"You'd tell Daddy—you would. Ooooo!"

"You were riding it this morning,"

"I knooow—but——" He remembered his thumb and yelled afresh at the agony it was supposed to cause.

"You can't have lost it."

"Does hurt. Soooo!"

"Where did you have it last?"

"I fell over, and when I got up it was gone."

A gracious Providence sent real tears to his aid. Under their protection Rodney knew himself to be safe.

"Rodney darling!"

The arms were round him again, but with a different quality of hold.

"Tell me, darling—tell me everything."

Victory!

In his mother's tone was no longer a trap for truth, but a plea for love and confidence. The sort of plea no one could refuse. His woe had wrung the justice out of her and brought her back to sympathy. Judge and prosecutor were transformed into guardian angel. No longer was her vision warped by the rulings of right or wrong. No longer she prisoned a sinner, but held a little boy to her breast—a poor, wee innocent, beaten down by the cruel knocks of a harsh world.

The rest was easy, and knowing not how long the perfect hearer mood could be trusted to last, nor whether he would be able to revive it at need, Rodney unburdened his heart of many a guilty secret. Thus the matter of the broken fishing-rod came to light, and even his association with the match-box was touched upon. So exquisite proved the joy of confession that Rodney attributed to himself a variety of misdeeds for which he was not in fact responsible. He alleged that it was he who had smashed the windows of the empty cottage at the lane end, whereas he had only been a looker-on while bolder Goths were at work.

At the end it was mutually decided not to bother Daddy with a recital of the day's doings. For, as Rodney said with great depth of feeling:—

"He's sure to be tired when he comes home, so p'r'aps it would be kind not to tell him anything."

Rodney could not remember a more delightful experience than was afforded in helping Mr. Hanaford rescue the fairy cycle from the cesspool. With a meat-hook on the end of a rope they angled for it, cast for cast alternately.

The "gor-darn thing" kept tumbling back most agreeably and thoroughly entered into the spirit of the game. The total loss of Mr. Hanaford's venerable hat set a crown on their endeavours, although in watching it founder Rodney displayed more enthusiasm than its owner.

His agonized clutch into empty air and subsequent remark—

"I dunno 'ow long I 'aven't wore that ole 'at"—struck Rodney as one of the funniest things he had ever heard.

"Your pin, Oo! Your horrid pin! You pricked me on purpose. Aaaah!"

So choice an example of humour did it seem to him that he mounted his newly-hosed and polished fairy cycle and, riding along the high road (which was forbidden), presented himself at the house of a small friend, and recounted the whole incident with a wealth of detail. When he had finished, his friend, who was under the strawberry nets ostensibly to frighten the birds, actually to fill his belly, remarked:—

"You're a liar."

Rodney was so incensed that he picked up a garden hoe and used it to such advantage that the ties of friendship were severed.

That night Rodney's father and mother sat on his bed after he had been dyed pink by his bath. His mother said:—

"Say your prayers, darling."

So Rodney said his prayers and was absolved from all sin. And then, with their heads near to his and their voices lowered to the softness of a pillow, they said little things to him of a simple but highly moral character. And Rodney listened grave-faced and attentive—a humid appreciation brimming in his great blue eyes.

"—— so that I shall be able to say Rodney is such a truthful little boy. Wouldn't you like me to be able to do that?"

Rodney produced a foot resembling a crumpled rose-leaf and showed it to them. Its arrival at that precise moment may have been an accident.

Rodney's mother pushed it back between the blankets and tucked him in.

"Good night, darling."

"Good night, Mum."

"Good night, you little devil."

"Good night, Dad."

Click went the light switch, and the white ceiling became black.

Rodney smiled in the darkness.

He thought:—

"How gentle—how simple—how credulous grown-ups are!"

He thought:—

"I wonder where that box of matches got to?"

He thought:—

"That cesspool was fine."

In the room below he could hear a murmur of voices.

He thought:—

"That will be Mum telling Dad all the things she promised not to."

He thought:—

"I don't care, 'cos he can't do anything without giving her away."

He thought—in a loop with grey ends—which was sleep.

Rodney could not remember a more delightful experience than was afforded in helping Mr. Hanaford rescue the fairy cycle.

Rodney's mother was saying:—

"You know, Jack, he really is a good little boy."

"Well, I suppose he's no worse," said Rodney's father.

"Worse than what?"

"Any other animal."

"Nonsense," said Rodney's mother.

Then Rodney's father began a story of how he had got the better of some man in the City——

The Ship in the Swamp

By W. TOWNEND

Illustrated by W. R. S. STOTT

AS the day advanced the heat had grown more oppressive. A white steam rose from the surface of the swamp. Though the dense foliage of the mangroves shut out the scorching rays of the sun, the shade brought no relief.

A crocodile slid down a steep slope and splashed into brown stagnant water that smelt of death. Some invisible animal blundered off at a gallop through the undergrowth. Monkeys chattered overhead. A snake wriggled its sinister length over a twisted mangrove root and vanished. Land crabs scuttled across green mud.

Undeterred by the fever that racked him and the toil of the long march, Ashbrook trudged slowly through the swamp, peering right and left from under his wide sun helmet. His strength was failing him, he knew. Yet more than ever was he determined to struggle on.

He forced his way through a patch of tall reeds that formed an alley between the mangroves. His face smarted from the bites of the mosquitoes that rose in swarms at each step. His bare arms and knees were cut by thorns, his khaki shirt and shorts were torn. There was a tightness in his chest and a burning sensation in his parched throat. To haul one tired, aching leg after the other and keep moving demanded his utmost energy and will-power and courage.

All at once he was aware that the boys were no longer following, and he turned to see what had become of them.

The three natives had halted and stood talking together in the gloom of the mangroves.

Ashbrook called out sharply :—

" MacConachie, it's getting late. Come on."

But MacConachie, his gun boy and bearer, shook his turbaned head.

Ashbrook sighed. It was worse than he had thought. MacConachie, of all men : MacConachie, who had travelled across the sea and spoke English as well as Arabic and Swahili and half-a-dozen other dialects more or less fluently, intelligibly at least : MacConachie was afraid !

" No come," said MacConachie sullenly.

" What are you afraid of ? "

" Dead man, *bwana*, he walk," said MacConachie. He said something to the other boys that Ashbrook, knowing little Swahili, could not follow. They grunted and rolled their large, bulbous eyes uneasily. Their black, shining faces had lost colour.

Neither argument nor coercion now would have the least effect. Twelve months in East Africa had taught Ashbrook that while the native might be humoured or driven into overcoming his fears of wild animals, lions or elephants or crocodiles or snakes, or human foes, no power on earth, not even death, would overcome his wild and unreasoning terror of the supernatural.

The three natives would go no farther, he was positive. Nor was he surprised. All day long they had murmured against the expedition. Even MacConachie, as a rule dependable, had for once shown himself weak and, to an extent, obstructive. If he bullied them, or used threats, after the custom of so many white men, they would without warning drop their gear and bolt and leave him in the middle of this fetid swamp to find his way back to camp as best he could. MacConachie rested on his rifle and scowled. He pressed his naked foot into the mud, water oozed over his toes. From the expression in his face he seemed ashamed of himself, bewildered, yet stubborn.

" *Bwana*," he said, " the s'ip ! "

" The ship ! " said Ashbrook. " Where ? "

" Here," said MacConachie. He raised a

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skinny arm and pointed toward the dark screen of mangroves ahead.

Ashbrook considered, then made up his mind.

"Wait here," he said. "All of you! Understand what I say, MacConachie?"

"Es," said MacConachie. His tongue moistened his thick lips. "No good. Dead man, *bwana*, he walk."

"Rubbish," said Ashbrook.

He turned and once more began to walk slowly, laboriously, through the slimy, rancid mud under the mangroves in the direction MacConachie had pointed.

And then, quite suddenly, before he had covered thirty yards, or forty, wading ankle deep in water, he saw the ship.

What MacConachie and the other natives had said was true. There was a ship, after all!

But was that ship the long-lost *Actium?*

Could it be that the six-year-old secret was to be revealed at last? It wasn't likely, he reflected. What real hope had he of finding the ship his dead brother had commanded here, in this African swamp?

And yet it was because of that hope, however slight, that he had made the journey.

The *Actium* had vanished from off the face of the seas, leaving no trace. There had been no gale recorded which might have sunk her. And had she been sunk by German gun-fire, surely word would have reached England!

What was more probable than that Jack had taken the ship over the sand bars at flood tide, up the river away from the Indian Ocean and the *Königsberg* and *Emden*, still at large in the autumn of nineteen-fourteen!

Even so, the mystery remained a mystery!

ASHBROOK crawled wearily over a cluster of mangrove roots, pulling aside the hanging lianes that impeded him, and then halted.

Never before in all his twenty crowded years of life had he seen so strange a sight as now met his eyes.

In front of him, full in the blaze of tropic sunlight, stern on, was a rusty steel steamer, heeling over to starboard, covered with green slime and vegetation, with one tall funnel, from which all vestige of paint had long gone, two stumpy masts with broken wire rigging, and two bridges, upper and lower. Mangroves grew high up over the level of the bridge deck on either side. Only the top part of the rudder and one blade of the rusty propeller were visible above the mud of the swamp. The bow was higher than the stern. The cowled ventilators amidships and the main exhaust at the funnel, the engine-room casing, and the wheel-house, all showed signs of heavy damage by shell-fire. The boats were missing. No sign of life was to be seen on board. The ship was abandoned.

It seemed incredible that any sea-going vessel should have reached so inaccessible a spot as this. Yet here was the ship, derelict, out of her right element, fifteen long miles from the sea!

Presently Ashbrook advanced once more, his heart thumping unsteadily, and spelled out the raised letters, no longer white but rust-coloured and difficult to decipher, on the stern. He read slowly, without understanding: *S.S. ACTIUM. LIVERPOOL.*

By degrees the words took on their real significance. The ship his eldest brother had commanded! The truth staggered him. He had found Jack's ship, the *Actium!*

He moved away from the stern, around to the port side of the vessel, through the mangroves, keeping a sharp look-out for crocodiles submerged in the mud. Abaft the engine-room bulkhead, just above where he judged the Plimsoll line would be, he discovered a hole in the hull. A shell must have penetrated the thin steel plates here and burst, perhaps, in the number four hold. Yet even after having been shelled the *Actium* must have escaped the cruiser.

The sense of mystery deepened.

He clambered along the limb of a mangrove and dropped on to the bridge deck and stood by the winch of the bunker hatch and, just as when he had made his way through the swamp, peered warily left and right from under his helmet, afraid and yet assuring himself he was not afraid.

Seven years before, when he had last set foot aboard the *Actium*, he had been a boy of thirteen. He remembered having heard his brother say, proudly, that for a tramp she was none too bad. At the time she had been a new ship, fresh from the yards, finished with her steam trials, but not yet loaded with cargo for her maiden voyage. Everything had been spick-and-span.

Boylike, he had been impressed, more impressed than he had cared to say. His brother, sixteen years older than himself, had been presented in a new light as one of a race of beings infinitely superior to ordinary landsmen, the *Actium's* captain.

And now, wherever he looked, he saw rust, rust and decay, slime and mud, the marks of shrapnel, the droppings of birds. And brooding over the whole ship, like some tangible presence, was the swamp, with its miasma and corruption, and the devouring mangroves.

Ashbrook loosened his revolver in its holster and advanced toward the port saloon alleyway and entered cautiously.

Never before had he seen so strange a sight. In front of him, full in the blaze of tropic sunlight, was a rusty steel steamer, covered with green slime and vegetation.

not daring to think too much of what he might find hidden from the sight of man.

Bats fluttered wildly around his head, rats scurried squeaking away at his approach.

He glanced hurriedly into each of the small cabins leading out of the alleyway. No traces of their former occupants remained, save only a few pitiful photographs, mildewed and faded beyond recognition, still fastened on to the bulkheads, and some books in the racks above the washstands and some damp and mouldy bedding. In the mess-room and pantry were piles of broken crockery and rusty knives and tarnished spoons and forks and lockers that had been gnawed by rats.

The saloon had all the appearance of having been gutted. The glass of three of the four ports looking out on to the for'ard deck was smashed. One of the swivel chairs lay on its side. Another had lost its back. Here, too, the smell was nauseating. The bats fluttered to and fro, as though resenting this intrusion into their home. There were flies everywhere. One of the teak-wood panels by the door that led to the starboard alleyway was splintered and scarred by bullet holes. On the carpet, which was caked with dried mud, were masses of faded papers that had once been soggy and were now dried to a kind of pulp. The big mahogany table was still covered by a faded cloth, and on the cloth lay a book, open flat, with a pipe to keep the page.

Ashbrook was touched by a feeling of pity. The book, "Great Expectations," and the pipe had lain on the table ever since the day the reader, whoever he might have been, had been called on deck, never to return.

As he moved about the cabin, brushing aside the swarms of flies from his face, he was startled by a deep and angry growling from under the settee. Not caring to investigate and perhaps have to shoot a wild cat with her kittens—the growls resembled a cat's—he turned and walked out of the saloon.

The cabins leading from the starboard alleyway—the mate's, the second mate's, the bath room, and the spare berth—were like the cabins in the port alleyway in that they, too, were laid waste and devoid of any sign of human habitation.

And once, Ashbrook reflected, men had lived here; white men; men whom, perhaps, as a boy, he had met and spoken with. Men now dead. He shivered and passed out once more on to the deck and climbed the starboard side ladder to the lower bridge, where he saw in front of him a door on which was a brass plate, green with verdigris, and marked "Captain."

He turned the handle and entered his brother's cabin, and then stopped and stared curiously about him. Here at least, there was no vestige of the pillage and destruction and the ravages of wild animals that he had seen in the saloon and the cabins adjacent.

He wondered why. He reflected presently that, while the doors of the saloon alleyway had been open when the crew had abandoned their ship, the doors of this cabin must have been closed.

He realized then that since his brother had gone no other human being had stood where he stood. No other eyes had seen what his saw. The thought filled him with an overpowering sense of his dead brother's nearness. In 1914 one brother went out, the door was shut. Six years later the door was opened, another brother entered.

AFTER a time he began to study the contents of the cabin.

On the flat-topped writing desk were some dusty papers, yellow and stained; a tray of pens, a brass ink-pot, in which was some powdered ink; a blotter. The glass of the bookcase was unbroken, the books were still on their shelves. On the settee were some clothes, neatly enough folded but thick with dried mud, and a dozen or so blue-backed charts, rolled. On the small table in the corner by the starboard door by which he had entered was a nautical almanack for the year 1914, and an old scrap log with a torn cover.

Ashbrook remembered that when he had last stood in this cabin the walls were covered with pictures, family photographs, photographs, too, of ships and shipmates. But now they had gone. Could his brother have taken them with him, frames and all, when he went? How was it he had had time to think of photographs in what must have been a period of stress and danger?

He wondered then what his brother's feelings must have been when he had taken his last look at his cabin. He tried to visualize his departure. He could imagine all who survived of the *Actium's* crew taking to the boats and rowing away through the swamp.

Of one thing he was sure: not a single man of the *Actium's* crew had outlived that journey.

He was about to open the door that led to the bedroom when his ears caught the sound of a faint shuffling on the lower bridge. He turned and listened intently, not frightened exactly, but uneasy.

The shuffling became the sound of slow footsteps.

The thought flashed into his mind that MacConachie had overcome his fear of the ship and had come aboard.

That, he realized, was impossible.

The man creeping about the bridge deck wore shoes. MacConachie and the other boys were barefooted.

Ashbrook stared fixedly at the starboard doorway through which he had entered, and the mass of green mangroves that grew above the rails and the blue sky beyond, and was conscious that someone was watching him through one of the ports that faced aft. He wheeled swiftly and saw nothing. Wild terror took hold of him. He was afraid of something that was not death exactly, but was worse than death, much worse. He did not know what that something was. He only knew he was terrified. He was in a trap, and unless he could escape, and escape quickly, he was doomed.

AND then the door on the port side of the lower bridge opened and he saw a shrunken, grey-bearded man in a tattered uniform with the tarnished gold bands that denoted the rank of captain.

Neither moved. They stared at each other in silence.

The man with the grey beard and the wizened, sunburned face had fierce, red-rimmed eyes and a thin, hooked nose and loose lips that showed yellow fangs. He wore on his head an old uniform cap with a limp and battered peak. And in his right hand he held a revolver.

Before Ashbrook could force himself to speak he fired. The shock of the explosion stunned him. The bullet struck the wall close to his head. Feebly, very slowly, trembling all over, he tried to drag his own revolver from its holster.

But the man with the grey beard began to laugh.

"Ashbrook!" he said. "Why, it's Ashbrook, that's who it is."

Ashbrook felt that of all impossible things that had ever befallen him this was the most impossible.

He spoke in a voice that he did not recognize as being his.

"Yes, I'm Ashbrook."

The man with the grey beard and the fierce eyes lowered his revolver and said, as though talking to himself:—

"Might ha' known it. But what's he wearin' that khaki for, eh? Silly o' me! Mustn't do that kind o' thing again, must I? Wastin' ammunition. What's the use o' shootin' at nothin'?"

"No use at all!" said Ashbrook.

The man with the beard and the fierce, unpleasant eyes had been, he felt, as scared by the encounter as he was. He stood in the doorway, muttering to himself, his dark brown, wizened countenance twitching, his loose lips working queerly, as though chewing.

"I ought to ha' known shootin' would ha' done no good, Ashbrook! That's what s been troublin' me lately. Gettin' kinda queer in the head. Do you know what that comes from? It's because I'm all by myself; alone but for you! And you're not much good to a feller, except to talk to, God knows! Yes, an' where's the comfort in talkin' to you? No comfort! Gettin' used to you now, Ashbrook, eh? You an' me, together aboard the ship! An' you not in uniform! I'm ashamed o' you!"

He began to laugh feebly in a high-pitched way that made Ashbrook shiver.

"He, he, he! You an' me, together, aboard the ol' *Actium!* Layin' here at her moorin's, ready to put to sea when I give the word."

He put the revolver down on to the settee next the rolled charts and thrust his hands into the pockets of his ragged jacket and whistled tunelessly to himself. Then he walked to the flat-topped desk and turned over some of the faded papers, still whistling.

Ashbrook had an uneasy feeling that he was acting a part, pretending to be unaware of his presence in the cabin with him.

Suddenly the man with the beard turned and glared at him with his red-rimmed eyes narrowed into two slits of hate under his fierce eyebrows.

"Still here, eh? Thought you'd ha' gone. In need o' company, too, eh? All right, Ashbrook, stay where you are! I'm used to you. I got to be used to you." He lowered his voice. "You mind this, feller: I'm captain. You're nothin'. Mate, if you like, but not captain! I'm captain: understand! An' nothin' you can do, Ashbrook, can mend it!"

ASHBROOK, watching him closely, felt that all the evil of the swamp was concentrated in this one man's being. He was evil, capable of any cruelty. In his fierce eyes he could read lust and treachery and hate. His mouth was the mouth of a fool, but a fool whose pleasure was to be vile and cause pain to others.

"Queer, ain't it?" he said.

He leaned against the desk, his hands once more in his pockets, his cap on the back of his head, and stared vacantly at the wall opposite.

"Both of us aboard the same ship, the two survivors of the *Actium*, an' one of 'em dead! That takes some swallowin', don't it? You an' me, eh? I'm alive, Ashbrook, you're the dead one, but you're more alive than me, I know! You couldn't help but be! I hated you an' you're with me! That's my everlastin' punishment.

Here all the time, night an' day, asleep, awake, you an' me, inseparables! That's the terrifyin' part of it!" He whimpered and put his hands to his face. "All these long months! Ashbrook, tell me, how long is it since you died?"

He looked at Ashbrook over the tips of his fingers that rested on his face. And at last Ashbrook understood. The heat and the fever had made him stupid or he would have known sooner than this that the madman with the cruel eyes and the bad mouth thought he saw not the Ashbrook who planted cotton and was alive, but the Ashbrook who had commanded the *Actium* and was dead.

Was he so much like Jack as all that, he wondered.

"Who do you think I am?" he said, thickly.

The man with the beard had, apparently, not heard his question. He went on talking hurriedly in his harsh, mumbling voice.

"I hated you always. Always you done your best to keep me down. You were younger than me, Ashbrook, two-an'-twenty years younger, an' yet senior! You ain't surprised I hate you, are you? I hated you because you had what I hadn't. You was in favour with the owners. I wasn't. You, you sanctimonious 'umbug, you put yourself in my place. I was passed over; with all my years of experience countin' for nothin'. You thought you'd got the better o' me, didn't you, you hypocrite, but I had you in the end, Ashbrook, in spite o' your airs! I had you! Poor old Bob Coombes!"

"You had me?" said Ashbrook, slowly. "How?"

"How?" The man who called himself Coombes began to laugh, rocking to and fro and hugging himself with his arms. "You ask me that, Ashbrook! You're dead, ain't you? I'm in command! You told me, didn't you? You told me that night, comin' down from Port Sudan, you'd no hope o' me gettin' command, ever! Because o' the whisky! Yes, you make me sick, talkin' pious like a missionary! God's truth, like a pukin' missionary! Because o' the whisky, you said! Well, Jack, I showed you you was wrong, didn't I? I never was a gentleman, was I? No, never."

Again he laughed, again he hugged himself and rocked to and fro. Then, becoming serious, he sat farther back on to the flat-topped desk.

"An' now I'm captain o' my own ship, with no one on earth, no owners, nothin', to stop me doin' as I dam' well please! Supplies enough! Grub! Tinned grub! A whole cargo o' grub! An' what I can kill ashore. Tobacco an' tea! Tons of it! No whisky, though! No, that don't do! Against orders! My orders! I'm in command, see! Poor ol' Bob Coombes what you laughed at an' kept from gettin' a ship! In command, Jack Ashbrook, instead o' you!"

"But why?" said Ashbrook. "Why?"

"Why? Be sensible, Ashbrook! Who else could be in command but me?"

"When did you take over the ship?"

"When did I take over the ship? Gad! what a question! I took over the ship the day you went out! An' you know it, you dam' dead hypocrite! I'm Captain Coombes, I am: alive an' commandin' the *Actium*, an' you, you're dead! That's the rum part of it! All because o' that German shellin' us an' drivin' us inland up the river! That, an' the bit o' the dynamo the chief engineer fixed inside my head, clickin' away like mad!" His lips lifted away from the yellow fangs and he snarled like an old and angry terrier. "But he got his, the chief did, sure enough! Same as you, you dead hypocrite with your cantin' talk of how good you was."

He chuckled and shook his head vigorously.

"You had your suspicions, o' course, and I don't blame you. You were right! Remember the night we got here; after that run up the river in the dark, through the swamps, over the sand bars! Gor', what a night! The hands didn't like it, they didn't! I told 'em, I did, the ol' man didn't know where we was at. It was true, too. None of us did. I had my plans, o' course. Cut an' dried, I had 'em. What could anyone do against me? I wanted command. I was goin' to have it. Why should I be passed over for a boy two-an'-twenty years younger than me? It wasn't fair. By Gor', it wasn't! My chance had come soon as that dam' German drove us up the river, an' I meant to take it! Ah! an' I did take it! An' why not? Didn't I have to?"

SEATED now on the settee, Coombes's revolver by his side, Ashbrook wondered what would be revealed to him if he listened and said nothing.

Coombes talked on, to all appearance quite unmindful of his presence. The extraordinary part of it all was he needed no further encouragement to talk; those few questions had been enough to make him disclose all the secrets he must have guarded for so long. And yet, Ashbrook reflected, why should he be surprised? Coombes talked to him, the brother of his dead captain, as he must have talked to himself, for the sake of hearing his own voice, and for no other reason at all.

"The senior mate in the company passed over. They say I drink. The liars! Ol'

He lowered his revolver and said, as though talking to himself: "Silly o' me! Mustn't do that kind o' thing again, must I? Wastin' ammunition."

Coombes is no good, they said. Ol' Coombes, he drinks. They lied! He told 'em, he did, in the office. He wouldn't touch a drop so long as he lived, he said, if they made him captain. They said they didn't believe it. They laughed, cuss 'em! Ol' Coombes was lucky, they said, to be employed even as mate. But ol' Coombes was speaking the truth. Not a drop o' liquor has passed his lips, not one solitary drop, since he took over the ship. One last blind that night, an' then no more! Not after they went, the last of 'em. No!

"The chief was dead set on gettin' away from the ship. He was scared that the wound in his arm was septic. It was, too. He wanted a doctor, bad! Did anyone offer to go with him? Did anyone offer? They all offered, or most of 'em! Who'd be navigator? Who'd take the boat through the swamp, down the river, to where there'd be a doctor, German or Portugee, it didn't matter a cuss which, so long as he helped the chief? Why, ol' Coombes, o' course! Who else? Get rid of ol' Coombes! Get him away from the ship where he'd been in the way! There was eleven all told put off in the number one lifeboat, the only boat that hadn't been shelled to bits, an' there ain't one of 'em livin' now but ol' Bob Coombes!

"The chief said, couple o' hours after the boat had left the ship: 'Mr. Coombes, d'you think it's possible we can get through?' The heat was killin' him. 'Aye,' said ol' Coombes, 'it's possible!' Possible! Aye, it was. 'For God's sake, let's tie up under the shade of a tree!' said the chief. Ol' Coombes was agreeable. Why not? While they was half asleep he took the compass to help find his way back to the ship an' he climbed ashore. But he wasn't in no particular hurry. He sat in a tree where they couldn't see him an' watched the fun. They tried to row back to the ship. The ignorant fools! Scared, they were! The river was runnin' fast an' strong, with a rip like the Severn bore. An' what happened? Ah, that's what ol' Coombes knows an' nobody else! One thing, he didn't have no occasion to use his gun, same as he'd planned! He didn't have no occasion to shoot. An' why didn't poor ol' Coombes shoot, eh? Why, because the lifeboat run on a snag that knocked a hole in her planks an' sunk her before his eyes! Aye, there they were, the ten of 'em, settin' waist deep in the water, the sun beatin' down on 'em, an' the river tearin' past an' ol' Coombes yellin'! That done for 'em; all the ten of 'em! There wasn't one of 'em got out o' that there river alive! An' why not? I laughed an' I laughed! I laughed till I pretty near burst a blood-vessel, I did; I laughed till I near died! I'm laughin' now!"

Ashbrook choked down the nausea that swept over him.

"Crocodiles!" he said.

"Crocodiles!" said Coombes, with a gasp. "Crocodiles! Great big tearin', snappin', bitin' crocodiles! Friends o' mine! Friends o' mine! They got them ten murderers they got the chief engineer, him what put the clickin' dynamo into me head to kill me!

"It was night, dark night, an' hot as blazes, when ol' Coombes got back to the ship. He said he'd put the boat on the right track an' they were goin' to fetch help, but he couldn't abear not to be with his captain! Clever, wasn't it? Gor', yes! Clever as anything!"

He began to speak of himself in the first person again.

"I bided my time in patience. What had become of the chief an' the others? Heaven above, what had become of the poor chief? That's what you kept askin', Ashbrook! You an' the others! I wanted to know, too! Where was the poor ol' chief, I said.

"There was twenty-nine mortal souls aboard when we left Liverpool. There was ten killed by the Germans. There was ten drowned with the chief in the lifeboat. That made twenty. There was you an' me. Twenty-two. Seven was left. I bided my time. Three days went by. D'you remember them three days, Jack? I laugh now when I think on 'em; you in command, me bidin' my time! D'you remember the five that kept sayin' they wanted to go? The heat was eatin' 'em up. They couldn't live if they stayed where they was. Poor ignorant fools! They couldn't live if they went the same way as the chief! I told 'em, with not a smile on my face, I'd take 'em. You wasn't to know. We slipped away from the ship that night. Dark it was an' hot. We went into the swamp, we did, on foot, the six of us. But it wasn't the six of us came back! No, it wasn't the six of us!"

ASHBROOK leaned forward. In five minutes, perhaps, or ten, he would know what he wanted to know.

"Did you kill them?" he asked.

"You heard the shootin', didn't you? You heard the shootin', an' you know I killed 'em. An' why? To put 'em out o' their misery! All five of 'em! Page an' Roberts went first. Gor'! I laugh when I think of it! The others, they thought the Germans was on us! There wasn't a German within a hundred mile, there wasn't! It was me killed 'em! Me! 'I,' said the sparrer, 'with my bow an' arrer!' All in the dark. Page an' Roberts first; then little Shaw, the fourth engineer; MacReady, the donkeyman; then Keggs. I never did like Keggs.

A mean man. He fought like a tiger! It was him you heard screamin'.

"But you never knew I was gone till you seen me climbin' aboard, did you? But you heard the shootin'. You knew what it meant. Ah, an' you let me see what you knew! That settled it. You or me, Jack, wasn't it? If I wanted command, I had to get rid of you."

"Yes," said Ashbrook, quietly. "You had to get rid of me." His fingers clenched the butt of his revolver. "Tell me, Coombes, you had to get rid o' me."

Coombes threw back his head and laughed.

"I said by unanimous vote of the crew—that was my joke, wasn't it?—by unanimous vote of Williams, the steward, an' Lawson, the fireman—all that was left, an' they was drunk, or they wouldn't ha' been aboard!—by unanimous vote of a drunken, speechless crew, I'd been elected captain! You laughed at me. You laughed once too often. I asked you, as man to man, all fair an' hearty, could I be captain! You sent me to hell, you did! You was captain, you said, so long as there was a breath o' life left in you! Fair an' hearty! I took you at your word, Ashbrook! The best joke I'd heard in a twelvemonth! A breath o' life! Gor'!"

He wagged his head in silent mirth and wiped his streaming eyes.

"I roused up the steward an' Lawson an' told 'em straight I was captain an' they'd have to obey orders. They laughed at me, the dam' cut-throats! 'Mutiny!' I said. 'I'll show you!' I did. They wasn't armed, neither the one nor the other, an' they thought they could scare me! I showed they was wrong. I'm no weak-kneed coward when it comes to dealin' with scum like them. I drove 'em over the side, I did, an' shot them, same as I'd shoot a snake, an' I watched 'em, I did, side by side, in the water, the pair o' them, till the crocs took 'em! Good ol' crocs!"

Ashbrook suppressed a sudden impulse to shoot. Mad or not, this red-eyed, grey-bearded little fiend was vermin.

"An' then, Ashbrook, then I was the happiest man alive! I had the ship! I was captain!"

"That's a lie, Coombes, I was captain! I'm captain now!"

"You! What are you talkin' so daft for? How can you be captain, when I'm captain?"

"All the same, Coombes, I'm captain!"

Coombes was trembling.

"Ashbrook, you're no good. You couldn't stand up against me. You tried an' you failed. You sit there, you dam' ghost, tryin' to frighten me, night after night, an' you can't. I'm captain of the *Actium*. You, you're no more than a poor dead ghost that can't do nothin'. An' now you'd better go. It ain't fair you bein' here by daylight. Night time's your watch on deck, an' you know it! You go, d'jer hear me?"

He rose to his feet shakily, took a few steps toward the starboard door, and halted.

"Queer! Why don't he go? Why don't he? He's got no right to be here, he ain't! Ain't I captain? I am. Then what's he want?" He glanced back over his shoulder at Ashbrook, who had not yet moved from where he sat. "He's not playin' no tricks on me, is he? He can't! He's where I left him, ain't he? Then why don't he do as I say?"

He stood frowning at Ashbrook, then turned and walked out of the doorway and began to climb the ladder to the upper bridge.

Ashbrook sprang to his feet and followed, pausing long enough on the lower bridge to toss Coombes's revolver over the rail into the mangroves.

Coombes flung open the door of the chart-room abaft the wheel-house and stood craning his neck forward and peering across the threshold, as though too frightened to enter.

"Yes," he said, "he's there all right! Kind o' scared me a minute. Thought he was gone. Didn't like it!"

He stepped away from the doorway and stood with his back to the rail, his arms folded across his chest.

Ashbrook advanced. For a moment it was difficult to see, as the interior of the chart-room was dark by contrast with the blinding glare of the sun. And then, feeling sick with horror, he made out on the settee the outline of a man's figure under a blanket, and his search was at an end.

Helmet in hand, he moved slowly into the chart-room. His limbs seemed all of a sudden to have lost their strength, he was weak and listless, unable to think; his heart-beats shook him: the heat stifled him and choked his lungs and made breathing an effort.

Timidly, nerving himself for the ordeal, he lifted a corner of the blanket on which were dark brown stains and gazed at the mummied face of his brother, killed six years ago.

His eyes were dim.

"Poor old Jack!" he said. "He got you, didn't he?"

The silence was broken by the voice of the murderer.

"He's in there all right, ain't he? What's worryin' me, then? I killed him, didn't I? All right, then, what's worryin' me?"

Ashbrook let the blanket fall very gently and turned toward the doorway and Coombes leaning against the rail, grinning.

"Coombes," he said, "I want to speak to you."

Coombes backed toward the head of the ladder that led to the lower bridge.

"Now, Ashbrook," he said, "you stay where you belong! No bullyin', mind! I'm not the man to be scared by a dead stiff like you! You can't do nothin' to me, you can't! I'm alive, an' you, you're dead! Same as I seen with my own eyes. Dead! With a bullet slap through your black heart, you are! You lea' me alone! Get back to your kennel, you dog!"

His little eyes expressed the first faint signs of knowing that all was not as it ought to be.

"Coombes," said Ashbrook, "you're a murderer! Damn you, stand still!"

Coombes was descending the ladder.

"Stand still, you! Coombes, do you hear what I say?"

"What's he talkin' so rough for?" said Coombes, uneasily. "That ain't like Jack Ashbrook, it ain't. Old Johnny never spoke like that. Rough, he is. Sounds like I dunno what. He's dead, ain't he? All right, what's he talkin' like that for to poor ol' Bob Coombes? What's it mean? Blest if I know."

He reached the lower bridge and hesitated. He glanced quickly toward the door of his cabin and then at the ladder that led to the bridge deck. He shivered and muttered: "Why don't he lea' me alone? Why don't he go? What harm have I done him? Gor' A'mighty, why don't he go?"

Ashbrook slid down the last half-dozen steps of the ladder and grabbed him tight by the arms.

"I've had enough of it! You think I've not seen through you an' your games." He shook him savagely. "Stop actin', you dam' murderer."

NOTHING that had befallen him since he had boarded the *Actium* prepared him for what followed next.

Coombes opened his mouth and began to screech at the top of his voice. Blind terror had seized him. He stopped screeching and fought with a strength that seemed scarcely credible in one so old and broken and decrepit-looking.

Ashbrook, nearly forty years his junior, thrown off his balance, lost his grip on his right arm.

Coombes struck him with his clenched fist in the face again and again, drawing blood.

"You're alive, you liar! Alive, damn you! You're not dead, you liar! Alive, by Gor'! Alive!"

Ashbrook grabbed at his wrist and held him once more.

"Stand still, blast you!"

Coombes collapsed. His knees bent and he sank to the broken, shrapnel-splintered planking at the head of the ladder.

"Gor', he touched me!" His head sagged forward so that it was impossible to see his face, but his shrunken frame trembled and his voice was hoarse and strangled. "He touched me! Gor' A'mighty! I killed him an' he's dead. I killed him, but he isn't dead; he's here, alive, an' holdin' me!" No longer struggling, he grovelled before Ashbrook, who let go of his hands in sudden loathing

Whether he was mad or not, this degenerate in the faded uniform with the tarnished gold bands had been sane once. Sane enough to plot against his brother and plan his murder.

He felt no pity toward him. Directly or indirectly, Coombes had been responsible for the deaths of eighteen shipmates. He was proud of what he had done. The long years of loneliness aboard the *Actium* had brought him neither despair nor remorse. He had regarded himself as captain and been happy!

"Get up!" said Ashbrook.

Coombes raised his head and straightened his frail body. A look of cunning crept into the red-rimmed eyes.

"Killed him once," he said. "Could kill him again! Know I could!"

"Get out of my sight!" said Ashbrook. "You make me sick!"

Coombes scrambled down the ladder on to the bridge deck and stood on the rusty plates gazing up at him, his wizened, sunburned face contorted by hate and fear.

"Then I ain't captain," he mumbled. He lowered his eyes and cringed, as though he expected to be attacked. "I ain't captain after all! No, that swine up there, he's done you in, he has! Poor ol' Bob Coombes, you ain't been captain after all! He's done you in, he has! Come to life again, after bein' dead! I didn't trust him ever, I didn't."

He turned, whimpering, and climbed over the rail and dropped.

Ashbrook heard him plunging through the swamp.

He leaned over the starboard wing of the lower bridge and stared down at the green mass of the mangroves about the ship.

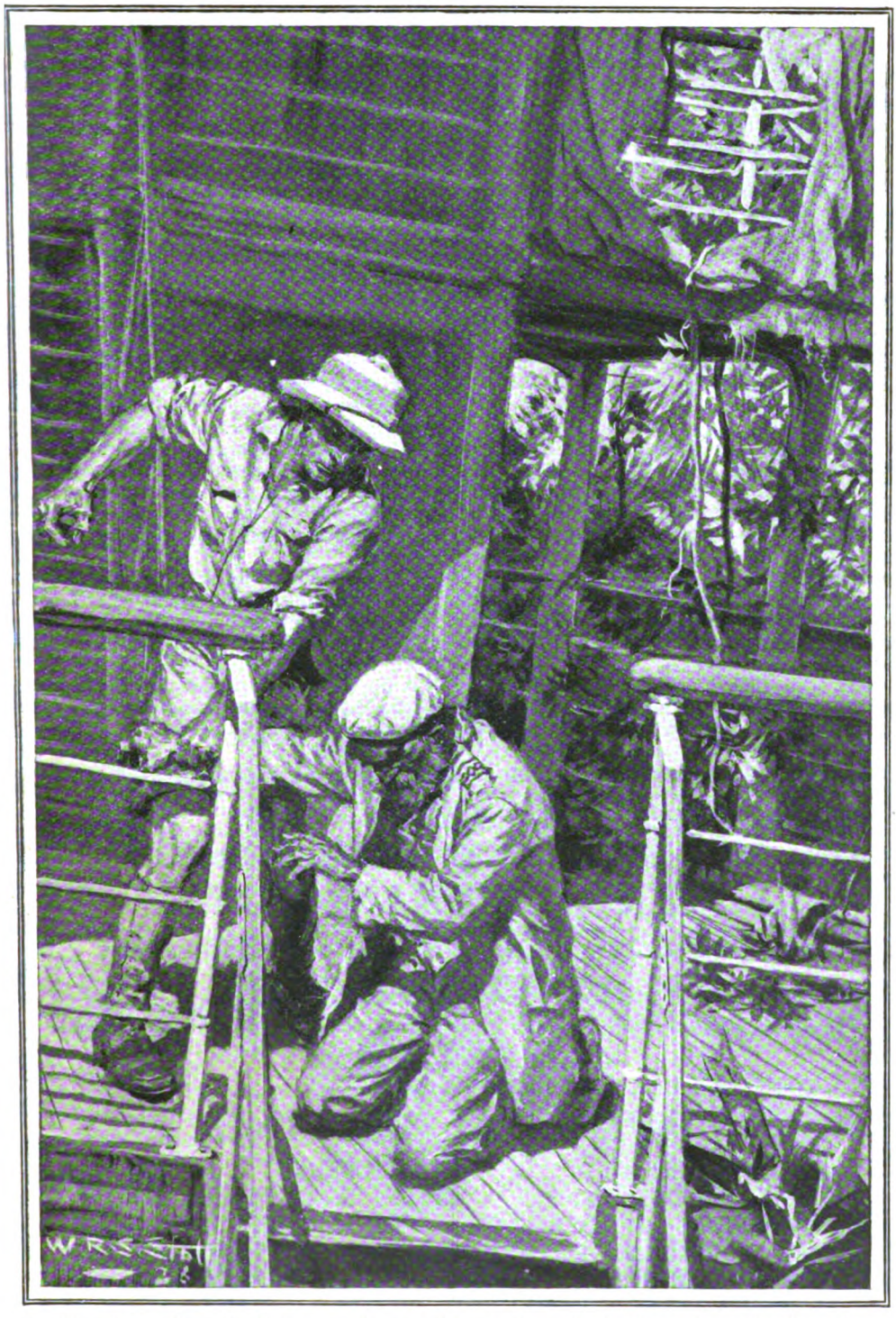
And suddenly he was contrite. Coombes was mad. He shouldn't have driven him away. He shouldn't have let him think he was the man he killed. It wasn't fair. Where was the creature to go?

"Coombes," he shouted, "come back!"

He could still hear him in the swamp.

"Coombes!"

And then he thought: Why worry? Hadn't Coombes killed his brother in cold



Coombes collapsed. His knees bent and he sank to the broken, shrapnel-splintered planking at the head of the ladder.

blood, and seventeen other men? Why pity a fiend like that?

His common sense assured him that Coombes would come to no real harm. No man could have lived in that swamp for six years without having learned by experience how to fend for himself.

Nevertheless, Coombes was a murderer. He should have taken charge of him and brought him to camp, a prisoner, so that the authorities could deal with him.

He descended the ladder to the bridge deck and clambered ashore through the branches of a mangrove.

"Coombes!" he shouted. "Coombes!"

There was no reply.

Ashbrook hurried in the direction he judged Coombes had taken.

"Coombes," he called, "where are you?"

HE halted presently, uncertain which way to go, awed by the sense of being alone, with Coombes perhaps spying on him from the undergrowth. He listened intently but heard nothing. In all the swamp there seemed neither life nor movement.

And then, suddenly, he heard the crack of a rifle fired close at hand and a wild, unearthly scream and the thud of a body falling heavily.

The spell that bound him was broken. He fought his way through a thicket: lianes tripped him, thorns held him back, the thick growth of the mangroves barred his path. He struggled up a sloping bank of slime and in a little clearing among the mangroves found Coombes, lying dead, a bullet hole in his forehead.

Someone was moving cautiously toward him.

He turned quickly and saw MacConachie approaching, rifle in hand, terror in his staring, bulging eyes. At a distance the two other boys followed.

"MacConachie," said Ashbrook, "was it you who fired?"

MacConachie trembled.

"Dead man, *bwana!* Dead man, *bwana*, he no walk!"

"Not now," said Ashbrook. "No."

He stared down at the corpse in its tattered, mud-stained uniform. The man's red-rimmed eyes were wide open and his yellow fangs showed in a wide grin from between his loose lips. It seemed to Ashbrook then that his brother's murderer was even now asserting, silently but persistently, that he and no other was the captain of the *Actium*.

"MacConachie," he said, "you'll have to get a grave dug. Understand what I say? A grave." He reflected. "Two graves," he said. "One here, MacConachie; one somewhere else."

It was right, he thought, that the captains of the *Actium* should lie as far apart from each other as possible.

Important Announcements for 1927

More SHERLOCK HOLMES Stories
by SIR A. CONAN DOYLE

SHORT STORIES BY THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR HUMORIST

P. G. WODEHOUSE

The countless admirers of Mr. Wodehouse's work should remember that his short stories appear in no other British magazine

OTHER LEADING CONTRIBUTORS WILL BE

RUDYARD KIPLING

ARNOLD BENNETT
W. W. JACOBS
"SAPPER"
EDGAR WALLACE
STACY AUMONIER
H. de VERE STACPOOLE
GILBERT FRANKAU
E. P. OPPENHEIM
EDGAR JEPSON
A. S. M. HUTCHINSON
ROLAND PERTWEE
H. A. VACHELL

ETC., ETC.

Is the ARTIST inspired by the MODEL ?

"Is the artist inspired—or, at any rate, influenced—by the model from whom he makes his drawings?"

"Is the man who makes studies of pretty girls to receive credit for his craftsmanship alone, or should his success be attributed largely to his good fortune in finding a charming girl to sit for him?"

These questions, which must have occurred to many readers who are interested in what are generally called "pretty girl" pictures, have prompted us to conduct an interesting experiment.

Selecting six well-known artists who specialize in this style of work, we engaged the services of an experienced model—Miss Doris Cornford, who has sat for such famous illustrators as F. H. Townsend, Claude Shepperson, R.I., E. H. Shepard, and Fred Pegram, R.I.—and sent her to each of them in turn.

"Please make us a picture—not necessarily a portrait—using this lady as your sitter, introducing whatever pose, costume, or background you like," we requested. "And please do not let the other artists know what subject you have chosen."

As a result we have received six entirely different drawings, each of them unmistakably stamped with the individuality of the man who made it.

Here are the artists' own explanations as to how their pictures came into being.

GORDON NICOLL.

BEING particularly fond of bold composition and bright splashes of colour, my tastes naturally lead towards period costumes. Fortunately for me, Miss Cornford, the lady whom you selected as model, happens to possess just the right blend of daintiness and dignity which enables her to dress as a lady of the Louis XV. period "as to the manner born," and without looking like a modern society woman decked up for a fancy dress ball. So my choice of subject was quickly determined.

The actual frock she wore was entirely different in material and colour from the one I have drawn, but it was similar in style and was quite sufficient to give me the essential folds of the drapery and the effects of light and shade.

I suggested the pose and composition myself, and she adopted it very readily. Had she failed to fit in with my preconceived notion, both in pose and personality, I could not have made a satisfactory study.

Therefore, I would say that, although a model may not actually inspire an artist, she will, if unsuitable to the subject, most certainly kill inspiration.

BASIL WOODHOUSE.

An artist who specializes in making studies of feminine types naturally gets into the way of summing up the personality of his models and "labelling" them.

Miss Cornford belongs to what I call the "sit-by-the-fire" type. That is to say, although she is essentially full of vivacity

Miss Doris Cornford, the model who sat to six well-known artists for the drawings on the following pages.

P. B. HICKLING.

I racked my brain for an idea, but without success. The lady came into my studio, took a seat, and the problem was solved. I have depicted her just as she sat, in the very frock and hat she was wearing at the time, altering only the features in order to "idealize" the study. Generally speaking, I have a very clear idea of the pose I require before the model arrives. If she—or he—adopts it easily, and gaiety, I fancy she prefers culture to cocktails, and looks better in a drawing-room setting than she would, for instance, in a night club scene.

I asked her to don evening dress and settle down in a chair. Being an experienced model, who could not be ungraceful if she tried, she immediately adopted a pleasing attitude, and I set to work on the drawing right away.

The pose is hers, the features are hers, and the frock is hers, too. So, if I may have the credit for the craftsmanship, the "inspiration" should be attributed to her.

POMPADOUR.
By GORDON NICOLL.

well and good. If not, the work becomes a painful effort and the result is lifeless.

I find that actors and actresses do not, as a rule, make good artists' models because they so often have stereotyped ideas as to posing from which they seem unable to diverge. An experienced model, with an instinct for posing, is a delight. That is why I enjoyed making this drawing for THE STRAND.

FRED PEGRAM, R.I.

The lady whom you selected for your interesting experiment happens to have been my model for quite a number of years. I have made literally hundreds of studies from her. In fact, she has become known as a Pegram type.

My drawings of women have naturally been influenced to some extent by her personality

THE ROGUE.
By BASIL WOODHOUSE.

must naturally have a general resemblance to her *ensemble*.

A. K. MACDONALD.

Although, of course, the model does influence an artist very considerably, I must confess that the "inspiration" for my study

To my mind, successful co-operation between artist and model depends upon something more than the ability to draw in the one and the ability to pose in the other. A model, to be really useful, should be something of an artist herself. She must be able to adopt the poses required with a complete understanding of the effect at which the artist is aiming. Unless he is fortunate enough to find models who pose sympathetically and intelligently, the artist might almost as well employ a lay figure.

The drawing I have sent you, though not intended in any way to be a portrait of the model,

THE CLIENT.
By P. B. HICKLING.

THE PAISLEY GOWN.
By FRED PEGRAM, R.I.

MY LADY'S GARDEN.
By A. K. MACDONALD.

came from the frock. In conversation with the lady whom you sent to sit for me I discovered that she happened to possess a delightful dress that was designed for her —from a Watteau picture—by the late Claude Shepperson, R.A., and made by Mrs. Lovat Fraser.

Attired in this she made a perfect picture of feminine daintiness. I sat her upon a settee, and arranged the billowy skirt so that it puffed out like the petals of a full-blown flower. From this I made several rapid colour sketches, and then allowed her to go.

Later, I selected the study that pleased me most and finished the drawing, working only from the "impression," and allowing my imagination a certain amount of play.

COLUMBINE.
By W. E. WEBSTER. R.I.

W. E. WEBSTER, R.I.

The filmy flimsiness of a Columbine frock appeals to me immensely, because it combines daintiness of form with delicacy of colouring. I therefore selected the frock I have depicted from my own collection and asked the model to put it on. It suited her very well indeed. She adopted a number of different poses, all of which were equally delightful, and I made several sketches. Then I asked her opinion as to which of my studies she preferred, and she selected the one which I have completed.

For many years I have been accustomed to working from a model who has rounder features than Miss Cornford, with the result that I have got into the way of drawing a particular type. Subconsciously, therefore, I find that I have combined the features of the sitter with those of my favourite model.

THE GOOGLE.

The sun is setting——
Can't you hear
A *something* in the distance
Howl ! ! ?
I wonder if it's——
Yes ! ! it *is*
That horrid Google
On the prowl ! ! !

"GOOGLES"

Some Idiosyncratic Birds and Beasts

An Interview with

V. C. VICKERS

"UPON the uncharted Island of Imagination in the middle of the Lake of Let's-Pretend lives the ghastly Google and his retinue of gorgeous Google Birds. . . ."

That, I fancy, is how the originator of the accompanying pictures would like to tell you about them, if you are still young enough to listen to fairy stories sympathetically. He created these colourful creatures, in the first place, for the amusement of his own children. Finding the work fascinating, he adopted it as a hobby for his leisure hours, and, almost before he realized what had happened, awoke one morning to find that they had actually hung a Google Bird in the Royal Academy!

The story of the Googles is a chronicle of incongruities.

Just as the pictures themselves combine the beautiful with the bizarre and the colourful with the comic, so does the personality of their creator provide a strange blend of conflicting characteristics.

On the one hand is a sober-minded man of business, Mr. V. C. Vickers, whose name is more readily associated with big guns and battleships than with idiosyncratic art.

On the other is the amateur artist—the self-same Mr. Vickers—with no training in the use of pencil or brush, but with an innate love of colour, an overwhelming sense of humour, and an almost uncanny understanding of the child mind.

THE COMMON FUSS.

I wonder why the Fuss should take
Exception to the Water-snake ?
I had a paddling Aunt who stamped on
Two at once at Littlehampton !

THE POUNCER.

"Poor little Flies!" the Pouncer cries,
"Those cruel Fish will bite 'em!"
So he pounces on their spines
As soon as he can sight 'em.

Children—unstinting in their praise, relentless in their criticism—have often inspired works of great artistic merit. Mr. Vickers is, in his modest way, only following in the tracks of such child-lovers as Lewis Carroll, Sir James Barrie, and A. A. Milne. And, as in the case of their writings, his pictures possess an almost undefinable quality which re-kindles the spark of childish imagination that lies dormant in all of us, even though we have "grown up."

Thirty years ago, when a youth, Mr. Vickers was interested in ornithology, and he tried to paint pictures of birds in imitation of the coloured plates he had seen in the encyclopædias. In this he failed.

THE QUIZZIE.

The little Quizzie takes her food
Just whenever in the mood!
Slugs, and ants, and yellow-ochre,
Senna-pods, and tapioca;
Anything except a spider
Seems to find a place inside her.

THE SUNBIRD.

"My sense of humour always got the upper hand of me," he told me. "No matter how seriously I set to work, my pictures always developed a comical twist. Once, for example, after I had heard my father talking stocks and shares, I found myself drawing a picture of a bird with curved claws that fitted a railway track, which I called the African Railbird.

"Years afterwards, with the sole object of amusing my youngsters—and incidentally of

GREAT SKULL-HEADED STONE TROT.

With ponderous tread he walks for miles
And miles amongst the stones,
Searching along the sandy shore
For fossils, shells, and bones.

And when the wind is moaning
And the night is very dark,
If you listen at the window
You can sometimes hear him—Hark!

passing the dreary hours of convalescence that followed a severe illness—I started trying to make colour sketches of the Google creatures.

"I found that the kiddies—and many of their elders, too—seemed to love them, and thus encouraged I began to make experiments and to elaborate the designs. An enthusiastic relative took away some of my most idiotic creations, and, to my utter amazement, actually succeeded in getting them exhibited amongst serious works of art!"

THE SOFT-NOSED WOLLOP.

The Soft-nosed Wollop lives on ice
(In summer, Halibuts and Soles),
And when it's slippery he turns
Upon his back and rolls.

THE LEMON-SQUEEZER.

Have you seen the Lemon-squeezer
Feeding Herbert and Louisa?

The methods by which Mr. Vickers obtains his remarkable colour effects are as original as the pictures themselves. He sits at a table, in an arm-chair, lies in a prone position on his bed—or even on the floor—surrounded by thirty or forty bottles of coloured waterproof inks of the kind used for tinting maps. Without any preconceived idea of his subject—without even sketching out the composition of his picture—he sets to work with a pen, drawing, perhaps, an eye and gradually allowing the picture to take whatever shape his fancy dictates. Obviously the intricate detail of the designs entails a tremendous amount of

care and concentration—both of which qualities Mr. Vickers declares are utterly foreign to his business self—more especially as the medium he employs allows of no erasures.

The most remarkable feature of the work, however, is the method by which the colours are applied. The gradations of shade are produced by varying the density of the inks. A pale shade is obtained by adding water. A dark shade, on the other hand, is the result of several applications of colour, each separate coat of paint being allowed to dry before the next is applied. By superimposing one colour upon another and by smearing the work in what appears to be an amazingly haphazard manner the most unusual variety of tints is produced.

That Mr. Vickers, despite his lack of training, has an exceptional colour sense, and an eye for decorative composition, is self-evident. Yet nothing amuses him more than to have his work dissected by an Art Critic. He regards himself as a clumsy amateur whose creations, though they may amuse himself, his children, and his friends, are utterly unworthy of serious consideration and a waste of energy that might have been applied to more useful purposes.

However, the Hanging Committee of the Royal Academy think differently.

ACROSTICS.

OUR thirty-fourth series of acrostics begins with No. 161, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 161.

GOOD wishes, kind expressions, words of cheer,
Heard at this merry season of the year.

1. A fish and ancient dynasty avail
To make delightful Prince of fairy tale.
2. Shelter for ships; were it to lose its head,
A garden shelter it would be instead.
3. To perforate all over, a large sieve,
The sort of question that a Sphinx might give.
4. To welcome it keen skaters will not fail;
It would be nicer with a head and tail.
5. Quick! Bird in England in the summer seen,
The surname of a very witty Dean.
6. Here is a land from which, beyond a doubt,
The poor Conservative has been turned out.
7. Filled with a song, in Sherwood Forest green
The maid beloved by Robin Hood is seen.
8. This almost wholly by a chin is made,
But such a tooth requires the dentist's aid.
9. Should there be four? Ask batsmen. True, 'tis tame
That, when they're drawn, so, often, is the game.

BOODLEBAR.

Answers to Acrostic No. 161 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on December 10th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every right one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 160.

UPRIGHT a name on either side we view:
Poet is *one*, poem and maiden *two*.

1. Makes revolution; often, too, the end,
When after five and forty, 'twill portend.
2. Excess of hands light task would fail to make,
Twenty per cent. reduction they must take.
3. Observe, now, one of five we do not meet.
Add half a saint, and all will be complete.
4. A metal, with the mortal who is here,
Could, rearranged, as Surrey town appear.
5. In port whose name suggests a ruddy glow
Chatham was interested years ago.
6. Restore its verb, 'twas first in bygone scheme;
A number give, 'tis half an English stream.
7. Who lost two sons has also here lost wit.
Old play and novel point the way to it.
8. The dead proclaimed the place, the living heard.
Here we remove a letter from the word.
9. A farmer, mountaineer, republican,
And this—'tis more than odd—reveals your man,
10. Change and decay in all around I see;
One letter lost, 'tis all the world to me.

PAX.

1. L	ov	E
2. O	perati	V
3. N	ot	A
4. G	ami	N
5. F	lushin	G
6. E	miair	E
7. L	ostwithie	L
8. L	ipp	I
9. O	rra	N
10. W	astag	E

NOTES.—Light 1. 'Tis love that makes the world go round. Five love, forty love, at tennis. 2. Operatives. 3. Observe. Not A, one of the five vowels. Saint Benedict. Nota bene. 4. Gold, gamin: Godalming. 6. Vendemiaire, first month in the French Republican Calendar, 1793. D, 500; deml, Aire. 7. Hiel the Bethelite, 1 Kings xvi. 34. In Cornwall; Westward ho, Dekker and Webster, Kingsley. 8. Philippi; Ghost of Cæsar, and Brutus. Phi, Greek letter. 9. Andorran; orra, odd. 10. All the world's a stage.

The Doctor's Love Story

By

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

Illustrated by
W. HATHERELL, R.I.

I.

DR. O'FLYNN'S practice stretched from his surgery in Little Endell Street round and about as far as Gordon Square on the north and towards Drury Lane on the south. It was a mixed practice, and though the surgery was frankly a converted shop, and though his work took him to slums like those in Silver Street, he had a few good patients, such, for instance, as the Burkes of Gordon Square and the Hon. Miss Corkran of Cunningham Mansions, all Irish and Catholics, like himself.

O'Flynn was of the peasant stock that supplies such good recruits to the priesthood and the medical profession; forty and over, fresh-faced, with a twinkle in his eye, a humorous tongue, and a careless manner, he was friends with all men and women; with Irishmen in high office in London, with the police of the Bow Street district and the criminals hunted by the police, with the publicans and the sinners on whom the publicans lived, with anarchists and old apple-women.

Careless of form, he sometimes contravened the strict dictates governing the rules of medical procedure; acting generally on the impulse of his heart, he sometimes even transgressed the laws of ordinary life, doing things that no English professional man would ever dream of doing—like, for instance, the thing I am going to tell you about presently.

Norah, fifty-eight, from Kerry, cook, housemaid, and general factotum, made up, with Billy, the surgery boy, the whole of the doctor's *ménage*. Billy would arrive every morning at eight, departing at five. Norah rarely went out, except to Mass; she had no holding with the "ould trash" of English people round about; aching always to be back in Tralee, she led the life of a prisoner in the Bastille, bound by the chains of household duties and barred from escape by her absolute, unflinching, almost incredible devotion to the doctor.

For the sake of O'Flynn she even permitted children to play on the house doorstep. You must understand, and this is an important part of the geography of my story, that the shop door was the way of ingress for patients; the house door, with its night-bell and speaking tube, was sacred to the doctor and private callers. Children, never being driven away from it, haunted it, urged by the passion for doorsteps that seems part of a child's mind make-up. Imitation tea-parties were given on it, perambulators were anchored off it, and hop-scotch pitches chalked on the pavement in front of it, just as tennis courts are laid out in more fashionable resorts; and just as the rotation of games visits the pleasure places of the well-to-do, so, here, the top season, the marble season, and the chestnut season followed one another with a regularity unalterable by war or the death of kings or the shifting policies of the Parliament of Westminster.

ONE day, returning to his doorstep and his midday meal, the doctor found a message awaiting him. Norah delivered it verbally as she uncovered his chop.

"Miss Corkran sent word after you were gone askin' you to call immediate, and I tould the chap that brought the message you wasn't an airoplane," said Norah, dish-cover inverted in her hand, "and to tell her you was out on your rounds and wouldn't be back till past noon."

"Bother Miss Corkran," said O'Flynn. But "bother" wasn't the word he used. It was always the way with rich patients.

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urgent messages to come at once, sent at impossible times, and he had experienced trouble and enough with the Corkran woman ever since her dog had died a month ago.

It was in the man's rough-and-ready nature to use the word " damn " in connection with her, and it was in his nature to understand and appreciate her, this attenuated woman of thirty-five, all spirit and affection, yet lonely, somehow, as Robinson Crusoe ; without chick or child, ever ready to help the poor, yet, somehow, without the power of making friends amongst the rich. Instinctive as a dog, and for that reason, perhaps, trusting in and loving O'Flynn.

A love that had no more to do with sex than Battersea Park has to do with the Albert Memorial.

A delightful friend—for whom he would have walked barefooted down Drury Lane, but the devil of a patient. She had just that fault, just that bit of selfishness in her nature that made her forget a doctor wasn't an aeroplane, had only legs, in fact, and dozens and dozens of other patients to see.

He didn't hurry himself over the meal, and when he started on his afternoon rounds he left Miss Corkran almost the last on his list, arriving at Cunningham Mansions about four.

II.

IT lies close to Gower Street, this great hive of flats, inhabited by the special breed of London people who live in flat-land—a creation quite distinct from the race of London people who still inhabit houses.

The entrance to Cunningham Mansions is bleak as the entrance to Pentonville Prison. There is no porter ; if the lift is down the boy who runs it will take you up ; if it is not down you ring and wait.

As his patient lived on the first floor, O'Flynn did not bother to wait ; he went up the stone stairs, knocked at the door, and was admitted by Margaret.

Margaret was County Dublin pure and simple, a stout matronly woman, with chestnut-coloured hair worn flat on the forehead, and a Dublin accent, which is to the accent of Kerry as Cockney to West Somerset.

" Is Miss Julia in ? " asked the doctor.

" In," said Margaret ; " faith, where else would she be ? She hasn't set foot to the ground since here you were last, achin' and pinin' on the sofa, and me near driven distracted with her."

She took his hat, and, leading him down the passage, ushered him into a sitting-room filled with twilight and the pleasant flickering light of a fire, the perfume of violets, and the fragrance of China tea.

Every room has a soul born of the spirit of its inhabitants or inhabitant, and this room, with its books in dainty bindings, its gadgets to ensure comfort, its priceless porcelain, and its three paintings from the brush of Daubigny, was a fairly faithful reflection of the dainty, dreamy, super-sensitive and super-civilized soul of its owner.

By the couch stood a table with tea-things for one, and near the table a chair with a cushion on which had once reposed the dog.

Miss Corkran, on the entrance of the physician, laid down the " Wild Swans at Coole " that she had been reading.

It is a thing to be read by twilight or firelight, and this super-refined sensualist had evidently been trying to do both. She held out a ringless, attenuated hand to the other, but she did not offer tea.

The Corkrans of Castle Corkran were a very old Irish family and the O'Flynns were just the O'Flynns ; perhaps that was the reason she did not offer tea even to this tried friend, or perhaps it was because, being bound up in herself, she didn't think.

He took his seat beside her with a few words and picked up a book that had fallen from the couch to the floor. He noted the title as he placed it on the table by the tea-things : " Have Animals Souls ?—Yes ! "

" And now let's look at your tongue," said he.

On that order, given to the commonalty, a mouth flies open like a trap-door and a tongue protrudes itself even to the roots.

But the Corkrans are different : moving and moistening her lips, wiping them with a lace-edged handkerchief, she presented a tongue on a salver, so to speak, a tongue fresh and innocent as the tongue of a child.

" H'm ! " said O'Flynn.

He took her pulse, a pulse soft as a six-year-old's, even, and full of vitality, if not of robustness.

" Bad," said O'Flynn ; " you haven't been doing as I told you. Oh, there's no use in talking of neuralgia when you won't listen to me advice. Here you've been lying ever since I saw you last."

" Oh, no, I haven't," cut in the patient. " I've been up and about——"

" Up and about ! It's up and out I told you to be. It's not your body, it's your mind that you want to take out for a walk ; I told you that last time, and I won't tell you again ; there now, you have it plain."

Miss Corkran sighed.

" Here you are," he went on, " just with your books and yourself—and that's no way to be living with a great big world outside and all its people wanting you."

" I can't bear people," sighed Miss

Corkran. "I know it's wicked and all that, but I've tried it—ever since—no matter——"

She pleated her handkerchief, and to O'Flynn there came the suggestion, and not for the first time, that Julia Corkran in the years before he had been her doctor and friend had experienced a cross in her affections.

"Maybe you never tried the right people," said he. "I come to you for money for the poor souls down in Silver Street or Drury Lane, and out jumps your purse, never a friend of the poor better than you. Well, get into a cab and come down and see them. The salt of the earth they are, and the welcome of God they'll give you."

But Miss Corkran shook her head; she could do anything for the poor but touch them; poverty, squalor, and dirt horrified her; she hinted as much, and then she slipped back to her ailments, imploring of him a sleeping draught for that night.

O'Flynn wrote the prescription:—

Sol sach ust (solution of burnt sugar)
ℏ xx
Tr lav CO (tincture of lavender)
ℏ xx
Aq ad ʒip ft Haust.
To be taken at bed-time.

"There you are," he said, handing it to her. "Send it down to Roberts of Bond Street. There's not another chemist in London I'd trust to make it up."

Outside he talked a moment to Margaret on the landing.

"Oh, don't be asking me how she is," said he; "haven't you eyes in your head as well as myself? It's dying she is for the want of that dog. Where's your senses not to have got her another?"

"Dog!" cried Margaret. "I told her that, and it's seven fits she went into at me words. 'Never another, never another!' cries she. Lost she is over that whazin' plate-faced brute of a Pakinese."

"Well, it's a dog or an undertaker for her," said O'Flynn, and off he went.

III.

HE took his way back to the surgery on foot.

A patient like Julia Corkran stands out strangely in a practice like O'Flynn's. He had seen that day twenty-one patients besides those who came to the surgery; working people, small shopkeepers struggling to make two ends meet, women to shudder over, and men sure to be jailed again within the month, and the only one of the lot craving pity was Julia Corkran.

"She's never known trouble, and that's what's the matter with her," said O'Flynn to himself as he went his way.

And she was worth five or six thousand a year; this woman without a family had what would have brought joy and well being to fifty of such families as formed the staple of his practice.

He thought of this and then forgot the whole matter as he turned into Wigg Street to see the last patient on his list, an old woman living down a foggy court and dying of cancer.

The fog, that grey Bloomsbury fog of autumn that seems to rise from the past, was dimming the lamps of Endell Street when he reached it. Carter's, the grocer's and oil-shop next door to the surgery, was casting its glow right out on the side-walk and on his doorstep, half revealed by the light of the nearest lamp and the reflected glow of Carter's, was a bundle propped against the door.

He bent down. It was a baby. A baby wrapped and wrapped in a dirty old shawl with other things underneath, no doubt, to make it warm and comfortable, for it was asleep; the match he struck revealed that, also that its face was dirty. Beside this living bundle was a small tin of salmon tucked close up to it, almost hidden by the shawl. O'Flynn flung the match away and looked up and down the street. Not a soul, nothing but the bell of a muffin-man, unseen in the mist, and the far murmur of traffic from the streets beyond.

It wasn't his first experience of the sort. Only a few months ago a three-months-old child had been left in his surgery, in a basket, like a turkey. A London doctor, if he is known to be a man of good heart amongst the lower orders, is liable to this sort of surprise. It had been sent promptly to the parish, and the fact advertised as a deterrent to similar contributors, yet here was another—and bigger than the last.

He bent down and picked the bundle up, kicked the tin of salmon on to the pavement, and opened the door with his latchkey.

Upstairs in the sitting-room, with the bundle on Norah's lap before the fire, unwrapping produced not only a fat child of one and a bit, just rousing from sleep and winding itself up to cry, but a feeding-bottle with a long, unhygienic rubber tube and teat.

Norah popped the teat in its mouth, and after a second's indecision it chose the better part and sucked.

The doctor, standing with his back to the fire, watched it, its black beady eyes taking in the points of this new environment as it fed. It was a boy.

The other had been a girl. The other had been very well-dressed, had worn a veil and little woollen gloves, and with his terrible knowledge of London and local life he could

Half revealed by the light of the nearest lamp was a bundle propped against the door. He bent down. It was a baby.

have put his finger on the district it came from, and on the sort of woman who had deserted it.

This was quite a different proposition.

This was a slum baby.

Now, people in the slums don't desert their babies. They do all sorts of other things, but they don't do that, and O'Flynn must have been blind, absolutely blind for the moment, to have been led astray as he was. Blind, or, anyhow, half blinded by the great new idea that had suddenly seized him.

Here was a creature that God had put in his hands, a human life in the bud, a fine strong boy that might live to be a University man or a captain of armies, or might live to be an outcast brought up by the parish, and ending, maybe, as a labourer or jail-bird.

It all depended on his decision.

"Norah," said he, "fetch me down that old tin bath in the attic and bring up a can of hot water and a towel. I'll hold the child. After that you can fetch me the little old soft blanket you'll find in the chest in me bedroom. Don't be asking questions, and while you're giving him his bath I'll nip down to the surgery and polish off the patients."

Two hours later a taxi drove up to Cunningham Mansions, and O'Flynn, a bundle under his arm, knocked at the door of the Corkran flat.

Margaret opened to him.

"Here's your dog," said he, "left at me door by the Holy Virgin herself. Not a word out of you! Take it in to her and tell her you found it on the doormat. I've given it three drops of soothing stuff and it'll sleep till the morning, and the Lord have mercy on your souls if you don't treat it like a Christian."

IV.

THERE is nothing like decision when you are dealing with women. Had O'Flynn been a weak man or a man not of the order to which he belonged, he might have been arguing with Margaret still, and this story would never have been written. As it was, he left her bludgeoned with the baby in her arms and an order to let him know "how she takes to it."

But the strongest-minded man cannot destroy the small worry that bores like a termite and that comes very often in the form of an afterthought.

He had got into bed that night with the satisfied feeling that comes of a day's work well done, and he was congratulating himself on the last stroke.

It was one of those things that rarely come to a man's hand. The woman wanted that which all women want, consciously or subconsciously—a child. Just as a hen will take to a porcelain egg, she had taken to the dog; this was the real thing if she would only, so to speak, sit on it. His knowledge of women and life told him that most probably she would. On the other hand, the child wanted to be saved from the cold world where it had been left on a cold doorstep.

O'Flynn had had all superficial sentimentality rubbed off him long ago, but his good warm heart going out to the creature had measured the distance—the distance he had carried it that night, the distance from poverty and neglect to wealth and the saving power of love.

Oh, it was a curious and grand business entirely; he ran it all over in his mind as he lay there in the dark before closing his eyes—and then, and not till then, came the small worry that had been waiting to trip him.

Funny thing, that tin of salmon. What did the unfortunate creature who had left the baby mean by leaving a tin of salmon with it? Holy Mike! it couldn't be that she'd left them both to be come back for! Nonsense! Where was the sense in a thing like that?

Carter's, the shop next door, sold salmon. The poor round about had three grand passions in the way of food: salmon, sardines and fried fish and chips. Could she have been to Carter's, bought the salmon, and then left the baby and it whilst she went off for something else? Nonsense; there was no other shop near by, and even if there was no woman in her senses would do a thing like that; and if she had, she would surely have knocked at the door to ask, or the police would. Well, there was no use in bothering over an insoluble problem, and, like a sensible man, he turned the worry down and went to sleep.

V.

O'FLYNN never read the papers, or only the *Freeman's Journal*, sent him every week by an aunt in Dublin, so he did not see a paragraph in next morning's *Daily Mail* relative to a baby lost by Mrs. McGinnis of Conway Street, W. Said baby having been taken out by Noreen, an elder sister, from whom it had been snatched by a tall man with a long black beard. Noreen, according to the reporter, being a child of ten years, and her memory and tale confused and contradictory.

O'Flynn saw nothing of all this and heard nothing of it, for his rapid cash and panel practice brought no gossipers to his consulting-room. The only report that reached him was a scrawl from Margaret.

received next evening; four words in pencil on a half-sheet of notepaper:—

"She's took to it."

He left it at that, well satisfied to leave it at that, and days passed and a week slipped by, and a week on top of that, till one Friday Norah burst in on him.

"That baby," said Norah; "it's Mrs. McGinnis's down in Conway Street!"

"What baby?" asked O'Flynn, who was in his shirt-sleeves unpacking some drugs.

"*What* baby? Why, the child you took off to Miss Corkran's! I heard be chance, not two minits ago, from Mrs. Strahane, when I went to get the pitatoes, and, says she, wid her big goggle eyes weighin' them out, 'that poor Mrs. McGinnis,' says she, 'never a word or whisper she's heard yet of her baby.' 'What baby?' says I. 'Why, the baby she lost,' says she, 'that was snatched from young Noreen by a big man with a black beard, bad cess to him, it and a tin of salmon the creature had bought and was fetchin' home to her mother; sure, where have you been that you haven't heard talk of it?'

"'Mindin' me own business,' says I, 'and two more pitatoes in the pan, please, to turn the scale!' She and her goggle eyes, talkin' to distract me with her short weights —and back I come hot-foot to tell you."

O'Flynn scratched his head.

Somehow or another he was scarcely surprised; a subconscious buffer had been building itself up to take the shock.

"Conway Street," said he, reviewing that Irish quarter, more Irish even than Silver Street or Tamplin Place. "Well, I'll be down that way this afternoon and I'll have a look; maybe she's right and maybe she's wrong, but don't breathe a word to anyone till I see what's doing."

THERE was a Mary McGinnis in his case-book, and, sure enough, an hour or so later, when he turned into Conway Street, he found it was the mother of the lost one. A big woman, pounding clothes in a wash-tub and surrounded by her tribe, happy to all appearances, vigorous, scolding, but breaking into a freshet of tears at the mention of the tragedy—whose other name was Pat.

He gave her half a crown as a contribution to her sorrow, and then, singling out and attracting to himself Noreen, took her by the hand to the little corner shop to buy her some sweets.

Noreen, black-haired and violet-eyed, and in old burst boots that belonged to an elder sister, had lied steadfastly, if not consistently, to all and sundry over this business, but she did not lie to O'Flynn. He had the way with him where women and children were concerned, and he had the whole story in two minutes under promise of secrecy.

She had been, that fateful evening, to Carter's to buy a tin of salmon, carrying Pat. She had planned to visit Naylor's front window in the street beyond to have a glimpse at the Christmas-tree which was being exhibited, though it was nearly a month before Christmas, which she had seen once already and which she proposed to see every evening, if possible, just as people go again and again to see a play. But Carter's had kept her waiting a terrible long time, so long that only by running as hard as she could pelt could she do the business in hand and get back without the chance of a skelping.

But she couldn't run with Pat, so she stuck him in the doorway where she had played so often, and which seemed quite safe, him and the salmon, and she hadn't been more than a minute looking into the window before she ran back to find Pat gone.

O'Flynn asked for no more, not even the genesis of the supposititious big man with the black beard. He knew. She had not dared to confess her crime. Pat had been "took" from her and invention had come to her aid. The big man with the black beard took all the scolding and skelping.

He left her happy with two ounces of liquorice balls and a scarcely relieved mind, for she had come almost to believe in her own story. Then he turned north towards Cunningham Mansions.

Pat had got to be returned.

There were no two ways about that.

You can't knowingly rob a mother of a child, even though the mother is a Mrs. McGinnis and her habitat Conway Street, W.

Julia Corkran would have to come down to a dog, or advertise for an infant, or get married and have one in the natural way. She wasn't too old. Sarah had one when she was seventy. Anyhow, he wasn't going to be bothered any more in the business; he had trouble enough in his practice presenting people with children in the ordinary way without this sort of thing.

He arrived at Cunningham Mansions in a distinctly gruff mood. Margaret let him in. She was all smiles. She showed him in without a word—a wonderful fact where she was concerned—showed him into the sitting-room, where Julia Corkran, her legs off the sofa, to use his expression, was seated in an armchair by the fire, stitching.

The fact that she looked better was nothing; what checked him was the fact that she looked younger, more material, more "full of blood."

He listened to her wonderful story of the poor mite that had been left at the door, scarce heeding, he knew the story so well; scarce listening, occupied almost entirely with the change in her, a change of which she herself seemed absolutely unconscious.

Then he followed her into her bedroom, where there was a fire, and where by her bedside stood a glorified cot, in which his Majesty, Pat, filled with the finest of milk, was sleeping the sleep of the just. A new hygienic feeding-bottle was on the dainty dressing-table, things were warming by the fire. He took it all in, and then, as he watched her bending over the cot, he took in the tremendous fact that he had made this woman a mother.

VI.

HE had come to tell her the child belonged to another woman and had to be given back. He left without doing so. He could not bring himself to the words or the act. He told himself that he would just as soon take a pistol and shoot her, and then he told himself that, all the same, it had to be done.

This mental discussion took place as he came along New Oxford Street in the direction of where he lived.

His mind, made agile by the stimulus of the business, sought hither and thither for an avenue out of this perplexity. Maybe Mrs. McGinnis would consent to part—or, at all events, stand off and adopt an attitude of benevolent neutrality for the child's sake.

The contrast of the Corkran flat and the McGinnis *ménage* appeared before him, deluding him for a moment to believe that no woman in her sane mind would rob the child of its present and prospective advantages.

He followed her into her bedroom, where stood a glorified cot in which his Majesty, Pat, was sleeping the sleep of the just.

For a moment only. He knew the poor and he knew his people. He knew that if Pat were to be discovered in Buckingham Palace, in the monkey-house of the Zoo, or the children's ward of the workhouse infirmary, it would be all the same to Mrs.

McGinnis. She did not want a future that she could not visualize for the child. She wanted Pat.

There was nothing wrong about Conway Street to Mrs. McGinnis, who had lived there

all her married life—nothing but the absence of Pat.

No. There was only one way out, restitution, and, arrived home, he called Norah down, closed the door of the sitting-room, and opened his mind.

Norah had to do the business; it was a woman's business, anyhow. She could see Margaret and have a talk with her, and between them they could break it to the poor creature.

Norah did not like the thing a bit, but she assented. She never said a word to show her feelings. She was that sort.

"I'll go when I've done me cookin'," said Norah. And she went.

She was back just before O'Flynn had returned from his evening round.

"I couldn't find it in me heart to do it,"

wailed Norah before he spoke a word. " I couldn't find it in me heart to do it. It's the life and all he is to her, and she wid her beautiful face like the blessed Virgin hangin' over him. Sure, what's Mrs. McGinnis, lettin' him run wild about the shtreets wid that girul ? Hasn't she enough childer not to be botherin' about the cratur ? You tould me yourself the place was like a warren wid them. Childer or not, she can stick. Hand nor foot will I lift for her to fetch him back."

" Then," said the doctor, " I'll just have to fetch him myself."

" Not you," said Norah, furiously addressing herself to the peeling of some potatoes waiting in a bowl.

She was right in a way. As things were standing O'Flynn would never have had the heart to do the business. But things were not going to stand like that.

It was next day at noon that he received a note from Margaret, the gist of which ran :

> " For the Lord's sake come at once. Her aunt, Miss Hancock, has called, and *won't believe her*. She's here now and I'm keepin' her till you come, though maybe she won't believe you either.
>
> " MARGARET DRISCOLL."

O'Flynn whistled. In their simple-mindedness neither he, Margaret, nor Julia had ever thought of this. He knew what it was that Miss Hancock wouldn't believe, and he had seen the lady once. High-nosed, antique, aristocratic, rather flighty in manner, and with that slight crack in her that seems to run through all Ireland and its people, making them so charming, yet not making, somehow, for clarity of vision and temperate views in the cracked ones.

If she wouldn't believe Julia and Margaret, she certainly would not believe him.

He said this to himself as he got into his overcoat and put on his hat. Then, feeling like a man who holds the ace and queen and knows the king is out, he got into a cab and drove to fetch Mrs. McGinnis.

THE routing of Miss Hancock, though a most satisfactory business, was spoiled for the visitors by the conduct of their ally.

Mrs. McGinnis, despite O'Flynn's fine words and promises and despite Julia's tears, refused to part with Pat. She took him away with her wrapped in a blanket. She showered blessings on all and sundry from the angels down, but to the suggestion that he should be " left for a bit " she was deaf and to Julia's tears she was blind. She was, in fact, in the mental condition of a cat who has just recovered a kitten ; her one instinct was to carry him off—and she did.

O'Flynn walked home followed by the vision of Julia, Julia standing by the fire in the sitting-room, her foot on the fender, her hand on the mantelpiece, her eyes on the burning coals, " controlling herself," whilst in the next room stood the empty bassinette. And it was all his fault. He had never told her the truth of the matter, and she fancied still that Pat had been left at her door by some unknown person.

" I've just got to write to her and tell her the truth," said he to himself, and, sure enough, that evening, when the patients were done with, down he sat to the most difficult job he had ever undertaken, for he found when he came to the business that he had to tell her the truth on more points than one.

His heart was moved in him. Julia, the friend and sometimes troublesome patient, had turned into something else.

It was that vision of her standing in her loneliness by the fire that did it—though maybe it had been creeping on him for a long time, this new feeling so impossible to express fully in words.

" I didn't know when I left him on your doorstep I'd left my heart with him," wrote he, " but there it is for you to have and to hold or to kick with your foot." He pursed his lips in thought, then he went on and on, covering three sheets of paper and ending, " If you feel you want to say ' no,' don't say it, just send me a telegram with the one word ' impossible ' ; send me it so I may get it before five o'clock to-morrow evening. If I hear nothing, then I'll know it's all right and I will call and see you the day after to-morrow."

He sent Norah to Cunningham Mansions with this note.

NEXT day he went about his business as usual. Five o'clock found him in the Strand ; he had seen the last of his patients an hour ago, but he couldn't go home yet—he went along looking at the shop windows till he reached Charing Cross, then he came slowly back.

Arrived home, he shut the hall door and came to the foot of the stairs.

" Norah," he called out, " has there been any telegram for me ? "

" Telegram ! " came Norah's voice. " No, sir, there's been nothin' but the ould rate collector botherin' to see you."

" God bless him," said O'Flynn.

Jeeves and the Impending Doom

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

IT was the morning of the day on which I was slated to pop down to my Aunt Agatha's place at Woollam Chersey in the county of Herts for a visit of three solid weeks; and, as I seated myself at the breakfast table, I don't mind confessing that the heart was singularly heavy. We Woosters are men of iron, but beneath my intrepid exterior at that moment there lurked a nameless dread.

"Jeeves," I said, "I am not the old merry self this morning."

"Indeed, sir?"

"No, Jeeves. Far from it. Far from the old merry self."

"I am sorry to hear that, sir."

He uncovered the fragrant eggs and b., and I pronged a moody forkful.

"Why—this is what I keep asking myself, Jeeves—why has my Aunt Agatha invited me to her country seat?"

"I could not say, sir."

"Not because she is fond of me."

"No, sir."

"It is a well-established fact that I give her a pain in the neck. How it happens I cannot say, but every time our paths cross, so to speak, it seems to be a mere matter of time before I perpetrate some ghastly floater and have her hopping after me with her hatchet. The result being that she regards me as a worm and an outcast and would gladly drop something on me from a high window. Am I right or wrong, Jeeves?"

"Perfectly correct, sir."

"And yet now she has absolutely insisted on my scratching all previous engagements and buzzing down to Woollam Chersey. She must have some sinister reason of which we know nothing. Can you blame me, Jeeves, if the heart is heavy?"

"No, sir. Excuse me, sir, I fancy I heard the front-door bell."

He shimmered out, and I took another listless stab at the e. and bacon.

"A telegram, sir," said Jeeves, re-entering the presence.

"Open it, Jeeves, and read contents. Who is it from?"

"It is unsigned, sir."

"You mean there's no name at the end of it?"

"That is precisely what I was endeavouring to convey, sir."

"Let's have a look."

I scanned the thing. It was a rummy communication. Rummy. No other word.

As follows:—

Remember when you come here absolutely vital meet perfect strangers.

We Woosters are not very strong in the head, particularly at breakfast-time; and I was conscious of a dull ache between the eyebrows.

"What does it mean, Jeeves?"

"I could not say, sir."

"It says 'come here.' Where's here?"

"You will notice that the message was handed in at Woollam Chersey, sir."

"You're absolutely right. At Woollam, as you very cleverly spotted, Chersey. This tells us something, Jeeves."

"What, sir?"

"I don't know. It couldn't be from my Aunt Agatha, do you think?"

"Hardly, sir."

"No; you're right again. Then all we can

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say is that some person unknown, resident at Woollam Chersey, considers it absolutely vital for me to meet perfect strangers. But why should I meet perfect strangers, Jeeves ? "

" I could not say, sir."

" And yet, looking at it from another angle, why shouldn't I ? "

" Precisely, sir."

" Then what it comes to is that the thing is a mystery which time alone can solve. We must wait and see, Jeeves."

" The very expression I was about to employ, sir."

I HIT Woollam Chersey at about four o'clock, and found Aunt Agatha in her lair ; writing letters. And, from what I know of her, probably offensive letters, with nasty postscripts. She regarded me with not a fearful lot of joy.

" Oh, there you are, Bertie."

" Yes, here I am."

" There's a smut on your nose."

I plied the handkerchief.

" I am glad you have arrived so early. I want to have a word with you before you meet Mr. Filmer."

" Who ? "

" Mr. Filmer, the Cabinet Minister. He is staying in the house. Surely even you must have heard of Mr. Filmer ? "

" Oh, rather," I said, though as a matter of fact the bird was completely unknown to me. What with one thing and another, I'm not frightfully well up in the personnel of the political world.

" I particularly wish you to make a good impression on Mr. Filmer."

" Right-ho."

" Don't speak in that casual way, as if you supposed that it was perfectly natural that you would make a good impression upon him. Mr. Filmer is a serious-minded man of high character and purpose, and you are just the type of vapid and frivolous wastrel against which he is most likely to be prejudiced."

Hard words, of course, from one's own flesh and blood, but well in keeping with past form.

" You will endeavour, therefore, while you are here, not to display yourself in the *rôle* of a vapid and frivolous wastrel. In the first place, you will give up smoking during your visit."

" Oh, I say ! "

" Mr. Filmer is president of the Anti-Tobacco League. Nor will you drink alcoholic stimulants."

" Oh, dash it ! "

"And you will kindly exclude from your conversation all that is suggestive of the bar, the billiard-room, and the stage-door. Mr. Filmer will judge you largely by your conversation."

I rose to a point of order.

" Yes, but why have I got to make an impression on this—on Mr. Filmer ? "

" Because," said the old relative, giving me the eye, " I particularly wish it."

Not, perhaps, a notably snappy come-back as come-backs go ; but it was enough to show me that that was more or less that ; and I beetled out with an aching heart.

I headed for the garden, and I'm dashed if the first person I saw wasn't young Bingo Little.

Bingo Little and I have been pals practically from birth. Born in the same village within a couple of days of one another, we went through kindergarten, Eton, and Oxford together ; and, grown to riper years, we have enjoyed in the old metrop. full many a first-class binge in each other's society. If there was one fellow in the world, I felt, who could alleviate the horrors of this blighted visit of mine, that bloke was young Bingo Little.

But how he came to be there was more than I could understand. Some time before, you see, he had married the celebrated authoress, Rosie M. Banks ; and the last I had seen of him he had been on the point of accompanying her to America on a lecture-tour. I distinctly remembered him cursing rather freely because the trip would mean his missing Ascot.

Still, rummy as it might seem, here he was. And, aching for the sight of a friendly face, I gave tongue like a bloodhound.

" Bingo ! "

He spun round ; and, by Jove, his face wasn't friendly after all. It was what they call contorted. He waved his arms at me like a semaphore.

" 'Sh ! " he hissed. " Would you ruin me ?"

" Eh ? "

" Didn't you get my telegram ? "

" Was that *your* telegram ? "

" Of course it was my telegram."

" Then why didn't you sign it ? "

" I did sign it."

" No, you didn't. I couldn't make out what it was all about."

" Well, you got my letter."

" What letter ? "

" My letter."

" I didn't get any letter."

" Then I must have forgotten to post it. It was to tell you that I was down here tutoring your Cousin Thomas, and that it was essential that, when we met, you should treat me as a perfect stranger."

" But why ? "

" Because, if your aunt supposed that I was a pal of yours, she would naturally sack me on the spot."

" Why ? "

Bingo raised his eyebrows.

" Why ? Be reasonable, Bertie. If you were your aunt, and you knew the sort of chap you were, would you let a fellow you knew to be your best pal tutor your son ? "

This made the old lemon swim a bit, but I got his meaning after awhile, and I had to admit that there was much rugged good sense in what he said. Still, he hadn't explained what you might call the nub or gist of the mystery.

" I thought you were in America," I said.

" Well, I'm not."

" Why not ? "

" Never mind why not. I'm not."

" Never mind why."

At this point he seemed to think he heard somebody coming, for he suddenly leaped with incredible agility into a laurel bush. And I toddled along to consult Jeeves about these rummy happenings.

" Jeeves," I said, repairing to the bedroom, where he was unpacking my things, " you remember that telegram ? "

" Yes, sir."

" It was from Mr. Little. He's here, tutoring my young Cousin Thomas."

" Indeed, sir ? "

" You will endeavour, while you are here, not to display yourself in the *rôle* of a vapid and frivolous wastrel."

" But why have you taken a tutoring job ? "

" Never mind why. I have my reasons. And I want you to get it into your head, Bertie—get it right through the concrete—that you and I must not be seen hobnobbing. Your blighted cousin was caught smoking in the shrubbery the day before yesterday, and that has made my position pretty tottery, because your aunt said that, if I had exercised an adequate surveillance over him, it couldn't have happened. If, after that, she finds out I'm a friend of yours, nothing can save me from being shot out on my ear. And it is vital that I am not shot out."

" Why ? "

" I can't understand it. He appears to be a free agent, if you know what I mean ; and yet would any man who was a free agent wantonly come to a house which contained my Aunt Agatha ? "

" It seems peculiar, sir."

" Moreover, would anybody of his own free will and as a mere pleasure-seeker tutor my Cousin Thomas, who is notoriously a tough egg and a fiend in human shape ? "

" Most improbable, sir."

" These are deep waters, Jeeves."

" Precisely, sir."

"And the ghastly part of it all is that he seems to consider it necessary, in order to keep his job, to treat me like a long-lost

leper. Thus killing my only chance of having anything approaching a decent time in this abode of desolation. For do you realize, Jeeves, that my aunt says I mustn't smoke while I'm here ? "

" Indeed, sir ? "

" Nor drink."

" Why is this, sir ? "

" Because she wants me—for some dark and furtive reason which she will not explain—to impress a fellow named Filmer."

" Too bad, sir. However, many doctors, I understand, advocate such abstinence as the secret of health. They say it promotes a freer circulation of the blood and insures the arteries against premature hardening."

" Oh, do they ? Well, you can tell them next time you see them that they are silly asses."

" Very good, sir."

AND so began what, looking back along a fairly eventful career, I think I can confidently say was the scaliest visit I have ever experienced in the course of my life. What with the agony of missing the life-giving cocktail before dinner ; the painful necessity of being obliged, every time I wanted a quiet cigarette, to lie on the floor in my bedroom and puff the smoke up the chimney ; the constant discomfort of meeting Aunt Agatha round unexpected corners ; and the fearful strain on the morale of having to chum with the Right Hon. A. B. Filmer, it was not long before Bertram was up against it to an extent hitherto undreamed of.

I played golf with the Right Hon. every day, and it was only by biting the Wooster lip and clenching the fists till the knuckles stood out white under the strain that I managed to pull through. The Right Hon. punctuated some of the ghastliest golf I have ever seen with a flow of conversation which, as far as I was concerned, went completely over the top ; and, all in all, I was beginning to feel pretty sorry for myself when, one night as I was in my room listlessly donning the soup-and-fish in preparation for the evening meal, in trickled young Bingo and took my mind off my own troubles.

For when it is a question of a pal being in the soup, we Woosters no longer think of self ; and that poor old Bingo was knee-deep in the bisque was made plain by his mere appearance—which was that of a cat which has just been struck by a half-brick and is expecting another shortly.

" Bertie," said Bingo, having sat down on the bed and diffused silent gloom for a moment, " how is Jeeves's brain these days ? "

" Fairly strong on the wing, I fancy. How is the grey matter, Jeeves ? Surging about pretty freely ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Thank Heaven for that," said young Bingo, " for I require your soundest counsel. Unless right-thinking people take strong steps through the proper channels, my name will be mud."

" What's wrong, old thing ? " I asked sympathetically.

Bingo plucked at the coverlet.

" I will tell you," he said. " I will also now reveal why I am staying in this pest-house, tutoring a kid who requires not education in the Greek and Latin languages but a swift slosh on the base of the skull with a black-jack. I came here, Bertie, because it was the only thing I could do. At the last moment before she sailed to America, Rosie decided that I had better stay behind and look after the Peke. She left me a couple of hundred quid to see me through till her return. This sum, judiciously expended over the period of her absence, would have been enough to keep the Peke and myself in moderate affluence. But you know how it is."

" How what is ? "

" When someone comes slinking up to you in the club and tells you that some cripple of a horse can't help winning even if it develops lumbago and the botts ten yards from the starting-post. I tell you, I regarded the thing as a cautious and conservative investment."

" You mean you planked the entire capital on a horse ? "

Bingo laughed bitterly.

" If you could call the thing a horse. If it hadn't shown a flash of speed in the straight, it would have got mixed up with the next race. It came in last, putting me in a dashed delicate position. Somehow or other I had to find the funds to keep me going, so that I could win through till Rosie's return without her knowing what had occurred. Rosie is the dearest girl in the world ; but if you were a married man, Bertie, you would be aware that the best of wives is apt to cut up rough if she finds that her husband has dropped six weeks' housekeeping money on a single race. Isn't that so, Jeeves ? "

" Yes, sir. Women are odd in that respect."

" It was a moment for swift thinking. There was enough left from the wreck to board the Peke out at a comfortable home. I signed him up for six weeks at the Kosy Komfort Kennels at Kingsbridge, Kent, and tottered out, a broken man, to get a tutoring job. I landed the kid Thomas. And here I am."

It was a sad story, of course, but it seemed to me that, awful as it might be to be in

constant association with my Aunt Agatha and young Thos, he had got rather well out of a tight place.

"All you have to do," I said, "is to carry on here for a few weeks more, and everything will be oojah-cum-spiff."

Bingo barked bleakly.

"A few weeks more! I shall be lucky if I stay two days. You remember I told you that your aunt's faith in me as a guardian of her blighted son was shaken a few days ago by the fact that he was caught smoking. I now find that the person who caught him smoking was the man Filmer. And ten minutes ago young Thomas told me that he was proposing to inflict some hideous revenge on Filmer for having reported him to your aunt. I don't know what he is going to do, but if he does it, out I inevitably go on my left ear. Your aunt thinks the world of Filmer, and would sack me on the spot. And three weeks before Rosie gets back!"

"Bertie," said Bingo, "how is Jeeves's brain these days?"
"Fairly strong on the wing, I fancy. How is the grey matter, Jeeves?"

I saw all.

"Jeeves," I said.

"Sir?"

"I see all. Do you see all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then flock round."

"I fear, sir——"

Bingo gave a low moan.

"Don't tell me, Jeeves," he said, brokenly, "that nothing suggests itself."

"Nothing at the moment, I regret to say, sir."

Bingo uttered a stricken woofle like a bulldog that has been refused cake.

"Well, then, the only thing I can do, I suppose," he said sombrely, "is not to let the pie-faced little thug out of my sight for a second."

"Absolutely," I said. "Ceaseless vigilance, eh, Jeeves?"

"Precisely, sir."

"But, meanwhile, Jeeves," said Bingo in a low, earnest voice, "you will be devoting your best thought to the matter, won't you?"

"Most certainly, sir."

"Thank you, Jeeves."

"Not at all, sir."

I WILL say for young Bingo that, once the need for action arrived, he behaved with an energy and determination which compelled respect. I suppose there was not a minute during the next two days when the kid Thos was able to say to himself, "Alone at last!" But on the evening of the second day Aunt Agatha announced that some people were coming over on the morrow for a spot of tennis, and I feared that the worst must now befall.

Young Bingo, you see, is one of those fellows who, once their fingers close over the handle of a tennis racket, fall into a sort of trance in which nothing outside the radius of the lawn exists for them. If you came up to Bingo in the middle of a set and told him that panthers were devouring his best friend in the kitchen garden, he would look at you and say, "Oh, ah?" or words to that effect. I knew that he would not give a thought to young Thomas and the Right Hon. till the last ball had bounced, and, as I dressed for dinner that night, I was conscious of an impending doom.

"Jeeves," I said, "have you ever pondered on Life?"

"From time to time, sir, in my leisure moments."

"Grim, isn't it, what?"

"Grim, sir?"

"I mean to say, the difference between things as they look and things as they are."

"The trousers perhaps a half-inch higher, sir. A very slight adjustment of the braces will effect the necessary alteration. You were saying, sir?"

"I mean, here at Woollam Chersey we have apparently a happy, care-free country-house party. But beneath the glittering surface, Jeeves, dark currents are running. One gazes at the Right Hon. wrapping himself round the salmon mayonnaise at lunch, and he seems a man without a care in the world. Yet all the while a dreadful fate is hanging over him, creeping nearer and nearer. What exact steps do you think the kid Thomas intends to take?"

"In the course of an informal conversation which I had with the young gentleman this afternoon, sir, he informed me that he had been reading a romance entitled 'Treasure Island,' and had been much struck by the character and actions of a certain Captain Flint. I gathered that he was weighing the advisability of modelling his own conduct on that of the Captain."

"But, good heavens, Jeeves! If I remember 'Treasure Island,' Flint was the bird who went about hitting people with a cutlass. You don't think young Thomas would bean Mr. Filmer with a cutlass?"

"Possibly he does not possess a cutlass, sir."

"Well, with anything."

"We can but wait and see, sir. The tie, if I might suggest it, sir, a shade more tightly knotted. One aims at the perfect butterfly effect. If you will permit me——"

"What do ties matter, Jeeves, at a time like this? Do you realize that Mr. Little's domestic happiness is hanging in the scale?"

"There is no time, sir, at which ties do not matter."

I could see the man was pained, but I did not try to heal the wound. What's the word I want? Preoccupied. I was too preoccupied, don't you know. And distrait. Not to say careworn.

I WAS still careworn when, next day at half-past two, the revels commenced on the tennis lawn. It was one of those close, baking days, with thunder rumbling just round the corner; and it seemed to me that there was a brooding menace in the air.

"Bingo," I said, as we pushed forth to do our bit in the first doubles, "I wonder what young Thos will be up to this afternoon, with the eye of authority no longer on him?"

"Eh?" said Bingo, absently. Already the tennis look had come into his face, and his eye was glazed. He swung his racket and snorted a little.

"I don't see him anywhere," I said.

"You don't what?"

"See him."

"Who?"

"Young Thos."

"What about him?"

I let it go.

The only consolation I had in the black period of the opening of the tourney was the fact that the Right Hon. had taken a seat among the spectators and was wedged in between a couple of females with parasols. Reason told me that even a kid so steeped in sin as young Thomas would hardly perpetrate any outrage on a man in such a strong strategic position. Considerably relieved, I gave myself up to the game; and was in the act of putting it across the local curate with a good deal of vim when there was a roll of thunder and the rain started to come down in buckets.

We all stampeded for the house, and had

gathered in the drawing-room for tea, when suddenly Aunt Agatha, looking up from a cucumber-sandwich, said :—

" Has anybody seen Mr. Filmer ? "

It was one of the nastiest jars I have ever experienced. What with my fast serve zipping sweetly over the net and the man of God utterly unable to cope with my slow bending return down the centre-line, I had for some little time been living, as it were, in another world. I now came down to earth with a bang : and my slice of cake, slipping from my nerveless fingers, fell to the ground and was wolfed by Aunt Agatha's spaniel, Robert. Once more I seemed to become conscious of an impending doom.

For this man Filmer, you must understand, was not one of those men who are lightly kept from the tea-table. A hearty trencherman, and particularly fond of his five o'clock couple of cups and bite of muffin, he had until this afternoon always been well up among the leaders in the race for the food-trough. If one thing was certain, it was that only the machinations of some enemy could be keeping him from being in the drawing-room now, complete with nose-bag.

" He must have got caught in the rain and be sheltering somewhere in the grounds," said Aunt Agatha. " Bertie, go out and find him. Take a raincoat to him."

" Right-ho ! " I said. And I meant it. My only desire in life now was to find the Right Hon. And I hoped it wouldn't be merely his body.

I put on a raincoat and tucked another under my arm, and was sallying forth, when in the hall I ran into Jeeves.

" Jeeves," I said, " I fear the worst. Mr. Filmer is missing."

" Yes, sir."

" I am about to scour the grounds in search of him."

" I can save you the trouble, sir. Mr. Filmer is on the island in the middle of the lake."

" In this rain ? Why doesn't the chump row back ? "

" He has no boat, sir."

" Then how can he be on the island ? "

" He rowed there, sir. But Master Thomas rowed after him and set his boat adrift. He was informing me of the circumstances a moment ago, sir. It appears that Captain Flint was in the habit of marooning people on islands, and Master Thomas felt that he could pursue no more judicious course than to follow his example."

" But, good Lord, Jeeves ! The man must be getting soaked."

" Yes, sir. Master Thomas commented upon that aspect of the matter."

It was a time for action.

" Come with me, Jeeves ! "

" Very good, sir."

I buzzed for the boathouse.

MY Aunt Agatha's husband, Spenser Gregson, who is on the Stock Exchange, had recently cleaned up to an amazing extent in Sumatra Rubber ; and Aunt Agatha, in selecting a country estate, had lashed out on an impressive scale. There were miles of what they call rolling parkland, trees in considerable profusion well provided with doves and what not cooing in no uncertain voice, gardens full of roses, and also stables, outhouses, and messuages, the whole forming a rather fruity *tout ensemble*. But the feature of the place was the lake.

It stood to the east of the house, beyond the rose garden, and covered several acres. In the middle of it was an island. In the middle of the island was a building known as the Octagon. And in the middle of the Octagon, seated on the roof and spouting water like a public fountain, was the Right Hon. A. B. Filmer. As we drew nearer, striking a fast clip with self at the oars and Jeeves handling the tiller-ropes, we heard cries of gradually increasing volume, if that's the expression I want ; and presently, up aloft, looking from a distance as if he were perched on top of the bushes, I located the Right Hon. It seemed to me that even a Cabinet Minister ought to have had more sense than to stay right out in the open like that, when there were trees to shelter under.

" A little more to the right, Jeeves."

" Very good, sir."

I made a neat landing.

" Wait here, Jeeves."

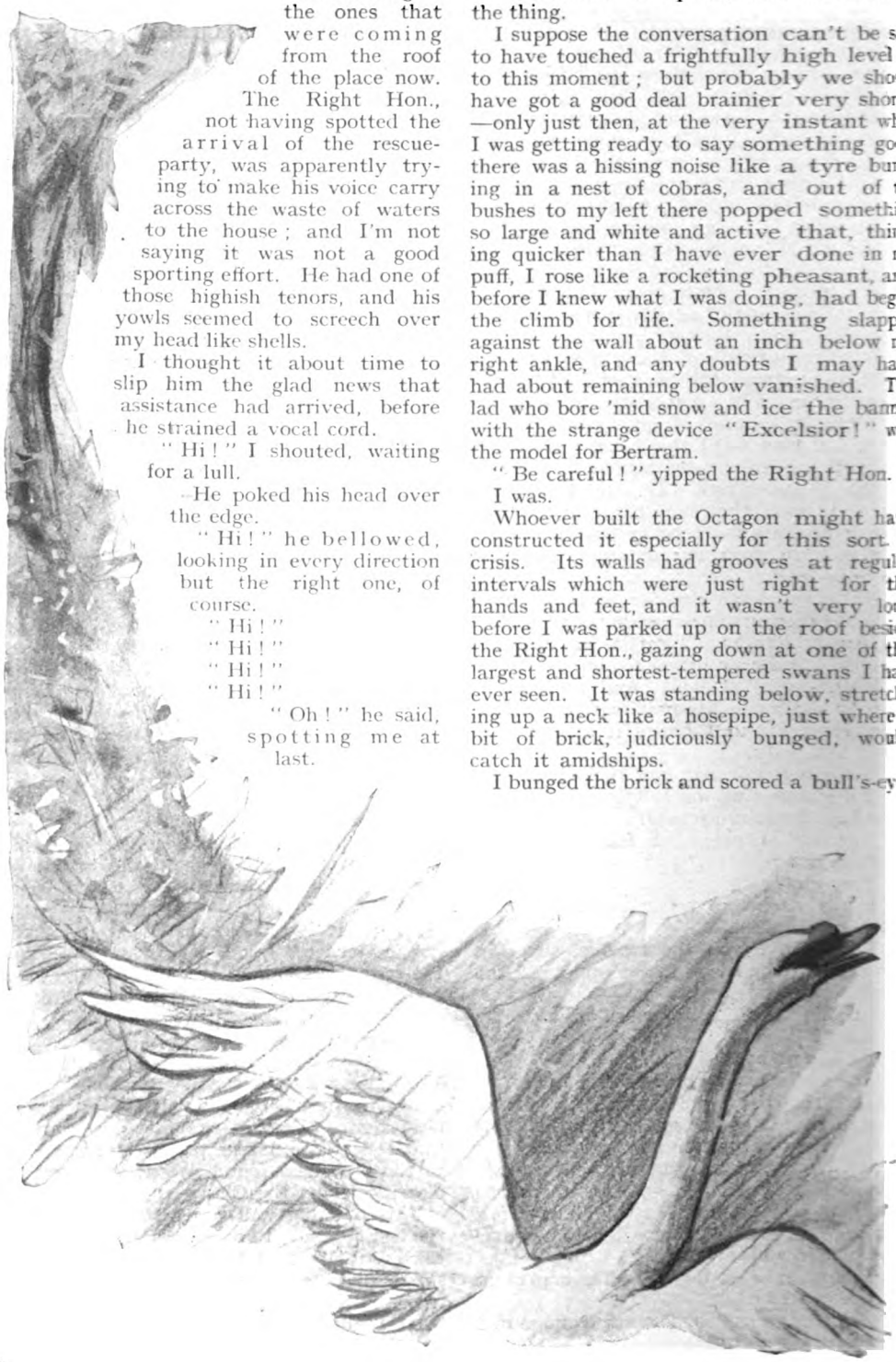
" Very good, sir. The head gardener was informing me this morning, sir, that one of the swans had recently nested on this island."

" This is no time for natural history gossip, Jeeves," I said, a little severely, for the rain was coming down harder than ever and the Wooster trouser-legs were already considerably moistened.

" Very good, sir."

I pushed my way through the bushes. The going was sticky and took about eight and elevenpence off the value of my Sure-Grip tennis shoes in the first two yards : but I persevered and presently came out in the open and found myself in a sort of clearing facing the Octagon.

This building was run up somewhere in the last century, I have been told, to enable the grandfather of the late owner to have some quiet place out of earshot of the house where he could practise the fiddle. From what I know of fiddlers, I should imagine that he had produced some fairly frightful sounds there in his time : but they can have



been nothing to the ones that were coming from the roof of the place now.

The Right Hon., not having spotted the arrival of the rescue-party, was apparently trying to make his voice carry across the waste of waters to the house; and I'm not saying it was not a good sporting effort. He had one of those highish tenors, and his yowls seemed to screech over my head like shells.

I thought it about time to slip him the glad news that assistance had arrived, before he strained a vocal cord.

"Hi!" I shouted, waiting for a lull.

He poked his head over the edge.

"Hi!" he bellowed, looking in every direction but the right one, of course.

"Hi!"

"Hi!"

"Hi!"

"Hi!"

"Oh!" he said, spotting me at last.

"What-ho!" I replied, sort of clinching the thing.

I suppose the conversation can't be said to have touched a frightfully high level up to this moment; but probably we should have got a good deal brainier very shortly —only just then, at the very instant when I was getting ready to say something good, there was a hissing noise like a tyre bursting in a nest of cobras, and out of the bushes to my left there popped something so large and white and active that, thinking quicker than I have ever done in my puff, I rose like a rocketing pheasant, and before I knew what I was doing, had begun the climb for life. Something slapped against the wall about an inch below my right ankle, and any doubts I may have had about remaining below vanished. The lad who bore 'mid snow and ice the banner with the strange device "Excelsior!" was the model for Bertram.

"Be careful!" yipped the Right Hon.

I was.

Whoever built the Octagon might have constructed it especially for this sort of crisis. Its walls had grooves at regular intervals which were just right for the hands and feet, and it wasn't very long before I was parked up on the roof beside the Right Hon., gazing down at one of the largest and shortest-tempered swans I had ever seen. It was standing below, stretching up a neck like a hosepipe, just where a bit of brick, judiciously bunged, would catch it amidships.

I bunged the brick and scored a bull's-eye.

The Right Hon. didn't seem any too well pleased.

"Don't tease it!" he said.

"It teased me," I said.

The swan extended another eight feet of neck and gave an imitation of steam escaping from a leaky pipe. The rain continued to lash down with what you might call indescribable fury, and I was sorry that in the agitation inseparable from shinning up a stone wall at practically a second's notice I had dropped the raincoat which I had been bringing with me for my fellow-rooster. For a moment I thought of offering him mine, but wiser counsels prevailed.

"How near did it come to getting you?" I asked.

"Within an ace," replied my companion, gazing down with a look of marked dislike. "I had to make a very rapid spring."

The Right Hon. was a tubby little chap who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes and had forgotten to say "When!" and the picture he conjured up, if you know what I mean, was rather pleasing.

"It is no laughing matter," he said, shifting the look of dislike to me.

"Sorry."

Before I knew what I was doing I had begun the climb for life.

"I might have been seriously injured."

"Would you consider bunging another brick at the bird?"

"Do nothing of the sort. It will only annoy him."

"Well, why not annoy him? He hasn't shown such a dashed lot of consideration for our feelings."

The Right Hon. now turned to another aspect of the matter.

"I cannot understand how my boat, which I fastened securely to the stump of a willow-tree, can have drifted away."

"Dashed mysterious."

"I begin to suspect that it was deliberately set loose by some mischievous person."

"Oh, I say, no, hardly likely, that. You'd have seen them doing it."

"No, Mr. Wooster. For the bushes form an effective screen.

Moreover, rendered drowsy by the unusual warmth of the afternoon, I dozed off for some little time almost immediately I reached the island."

This wasn't the sort of thing I wanted his mind dwelling on, so I changed the subject.

"Wet, isn't it, what?" I said.

"I had already observed it," said the Right Hon. in one of those nasty, bitter voices. "I thank you, however, for drawing the matter to my attention."

Chit-chat about the weather hadn't gone with much of a bang, I perceived. I had a shot at Bird Life in the Home Counties.

"Have you ever noticed," I said, "how a swan's eyebrows sort of meet in the middle?"

"I have had every opportunity of observing all that there is to observe about swans."

"Gives them a sort of peevish look, what?"

"The look to which you allude has not escaped me."

"Rummy," I said, rather warming to my subject, "how bad an effect family life has on a swan's disposition."

"I wish you would select some other topic of conversation than swans."

"No, but, really, it's rather interesting. I mean to say, our old pal down there is probably a perfect ray of sunshine in normal circumstances. Quite the domestic pet, don't you know. But purely and simply because the little woman happens to be nesting——"

I PAUSED. You will scarcely believe me, but until this moment, what with all the recent bustle and activity, I had clean forgotten that, while we were treed up on the roof like this, there lurked all the time in the background one whose giant brain, if notified of the emergency and requested to flock round, would probably be able to think up half-a-dozen schemes for solving our little difficulties in a couple of minutes.

"Jeeves!" I shouted.

"Sir?" came a faint, respectful voice from the great open spaces.

"My man," I explained to the Right Hon. "A fellow of infinite resource and sagacity. He'll have us out of this in a minute. Jeeves!"

"Sir?"

"I'm sitting on the roof."

"Very good, sir."

"Don't say 'very good.' Come and help us. Mr. Filmer and I are treed, Jeeves."

"Very good, sir."

"Don't keep saying 'Very good.' It's nothing of the kind. The place is alive with swans."

"I will attend to the matter immediately, sir."

I turned to the Right Hon. I even went so far as to pat him on the back. It was like slapping a wet sponge.

"All is well," I said. "Jeeves is coming."

"What can he do?"

I frowned a trifle. The man's tone had been peevish, and I didn't like it.

"That," I replied with a touch of stiffness, "we cannot say until we see him in action. He may pursue one course, or he may pursue another. But on one thing you can rely with the utmost confidence—Jeeves will find a way. See, here he comes stealing through the undergrowth, his face shining with the light of pure intelligence. There are no limits to Jeeves's brain-power. He virtually lives on fish."

I bent over the edge and peered into the abyss.

"Look out for the swan, Jeeves."

"I have the bird under close observation, sir."

The swan had been uncoiling a further supply of neck in our direction; but now he whipped round. The sound of a voice speaking in his rear seemed to affect him powerfully. He subjected Jeeves to a short, keen scrutiny; and then, taking in some breath for hissing purposes, gave a sort of jump and charged ahead.

"Look out, Jeeves!"

"Very good, sir."

Well, I could have told that swan it was no use. As swans go, he may have been well up in the ranks of the intelligentsia; but, when it came to pitting his brains against Jeeves, he was simply wasting his time. He might just as well have gone home at once.

Every young man starting life ought to know how to cope with an angry swan, so I will briefly relate the proper procedure. You start by picking up the raincoat which somebody has dropped; and then, judging the distance to a nicety, you simply shove the raincoat over the bird's head; and, taking the boat-hook which you have prudently brought with you, you insert it underneath the swan and heave. The swan goes into a bush and starts trying to unscramble itself; and you saunter back to your boat, taking with you any friends who happen at the moment to be sitting on roofs in the vicinity. That was Jeeves's method, and I cannot see how it could have been improved upon.

The Right Hon. showing a turn of speed of which I would not have believed him capable, we were in the boat in considerably under two ticks.

"You behaved very intelligently, my man," said the Right Hon. as we pushed away from the shore.

" I endeavour to give satisfaction, sir."

The Right Hon. appeared to have said his say for the time being. From that moment he seemed to sort of huddle up and meditate. Dashed absorbed he was. Even when I caught a crab and shot about a pint of water down his neck he didn't seem to notice it.

It was only when we were landing that he came to life again.

" Mr. Wooster."

" Oh, ah ? "

" I have been thinking of that matter of which I spoke to you some time back—the problem of how my boat can have got adrift."

I didn't like this.

" The dickens of a problem," I said. " Insoluble, I should call it. Better not bother about it any more."

" On the contrary, I have arrived at a solution, and one which I think is the only feasible solution. I am convinced that my boat was set adrift by the boy Thomas, my hostess's son."

" Oh, I say, no ! Why ? "

" He had a grudge against me. And it is the sort of thing only a boy, or one who is practically an imbecile, would have thought of doing."

He legged it for the house ; and I turned to Jeeves, aghast. Yes, you might say aghast.

" You heard, Jeeves ? "

" Yes, sir."

" What's to be done ? "

" Perhaps Mr. Filmer, on thinking the matter over, will decide that his suspicions are unjust."

" But they aren't unjust."

" No, sir."

" Then what's to be done ? "

" I could not say, sir."

I PUSHED off rather smartly to the house and reported to Aunt Agatha that the Right Hon. had been salved ; and then I toddled upstairs to have a hot bath, being considerably soaked from stem to stern as the result of my rambles. While I was enjoying the grateful warmth, a knock came at the door.

It was Purvis, Aunt Agatha's butler.

" Mrs. Gregson desires me to say, sir, that she would be glad to see you as soon as you are ready."

" But she has seen me."

" I gather that she wishes to see you again, sir."

" Oh, right-ho."

I lay beneath the surface for another few minutes ; then, having dried the frame, went along the corridor to my room. Jeeves was there, fiddling about with underclothing.

" Oh, Jeeves," I said, " I've just been thinking. Oughtn't somebody to go and give Mr. Filmer a spot of quinine or something ? Errand of mercy, what ? "

" I have already done so, sir."

" Good. I wouldn't say I liked the man frightfully, but I don't want him to get a cold in the head." I shoved on a sock. " Jeeves," I said, " I suppose you know that we've got to think of something pretty quick ? I mean to say, you realize the position ? Mr. Filmer suspects young Thomas of doing exactly what he did do, and if he brings home the charge Aunt Agatha will undoubtedly fire Mr. Little, and then Mrs. Little will find out what Mr. Little has been up to, and what will be the upshot and outcome, Jeeves ? I will tell you. It will mean that Mrs. Little will secure the goods on Mr. Little to an extent to which, though only a bachelor myself, I should say that no wife ought to secure the goods on her husband if the proper give and take of married life—what you might call the essential balance, as it were—is to be preserved. Women bring these things up, Jeeves. They do not forget and forgive."

" Very true, sir."

" Then how about it ? "

" I have already attended to the matter, sir."

" You have ? "

" Yes, sir. I had scarcely left you when the solution of the affair presented itself to me. It was a remark of Mr. Filmer's that gave me the idea."

" Jeeves, you're a marvel ! "

" Thank you very much, sir."

" What was the solution ? "

" I conceived the notion of going to Mr. Filmer and saying that it was you who had stolen his boat, sir."

The man flickered before me. I clutched a sock in a feverish grip.

" Saying—what ? "

" At first Mr. Filmer was reluctant to credit my statement. But I pointed out to him that you had certainly known that he was on the island—a fact which he agreed was highly significant. I pointed out, furthermore, that you were a light-hearted young gentleman, sir, who might well do such a thing as a practical joke. I left him quite convinced, and there is now no danger of his attributing the action to Master Thomas."

I gazed at the blighter spellbound.

" And that's what you consider a neat solution ? " I said.

" Yes, sir. Mr. Little will now retain his position as desired."

" And what about me ? "

" You are also benefited, sir."

" Oh, I am, am I ? "

"Yes, sir. I have ascertained that Mrs. Gregson's motive in inviting you to this house was that she might present you to Mr. Filmer with a view to your becoming his private secretary."

"What!"

"Yes, sir. Purvis, the butler, chanced to overhear Mrs. Gregson in conversation with Mr. Filmer on the matter."

"Secretary to that superfatted bore! Jeeves, I could never have survived it."

"No, sir. I fancy you would not have found it agreeable. Mr. Filmer is scarcely a congenial companion for you. Yet, had Mrs. Gregson secured the position for you, you might have found it embarrassing to decline to accept it."

"Embarrassing is right!"

"Yes, sir."

"But I say, Jeeves, there's just one point which you seem to have overlooked. Where exactly do I get off?"

"Sir?"

"I mean to say, Aunt Agatha sent word by Purvis just now that she wanted to see me. Probably she's polishing up her hatchet at this very moment."

"It might be the most judicious plan not to meet her, sir."

"But how can I help it?"

"I pointed out," said Jeeves, "that you were a light-hearted young gentleman who might well do such a thing as a practical joke."

"There is a good, stout waterpipe running down the wall immediately outside this window, sir. And I could have the two-seater waiting outside the park gates in twenty minutes."

I eyed him with reverence.

"Jeeves," I said, "you are always right. You couldn't make it five, could you?"

"Let us say ten, sir."

"Ten it is. Lay out some raiment suitable for travel, and leave the rest to me. Where is this waterpipe of which you speak so highly?"

A HUNDRED PER CENT

By

"SAPPER" (H.C.McNEILE)

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

THERE were men who said of Jim Sefton that he was a hundred per cent. impeccably honest. Which, seeing that he was a millionaire by his own unaided efforts at the age of thirty-five, was a pretty big compliment.

Nevertheless, it was no more than the truth. Luck in prospecting, followed by hard work directed by a keen brain, had allowed Jim Sefton to return to England whilst still a young man, in possession of as much money as he was ever likely to require. But during those years of work no action of his had ever savoured even of sharp practice.

Moreover, he was such a perfectly charming individual that no one ever grudged him his success. Melodramatic fiction frequently portrays a millionaire as a man of dour features dealing out death and destruction to business rivals, and generally ending with a ruined digestion and a diet of rusks and Vichy water. Whereas Jim Sefton fulfilled exactly the popular conception of a typical English sportsman of the best type. He played cricket for the I Z.; he hunted with the Quorn, and he was in the habit of going round Sandwich in under eighty. He loved life, was always ready to help a pal, and possessed just that code of morals that fitted the type he belonged to. Moreover, he was endowed with the good-looking sort of ugliness which wins in a canter where women are concerned.

In short, an astoundingly delightful person who, at the moment this story opens, was shaving preparatory to dinner. Moreover, he was wondering simultaneously. Not, be it said, about tin mines and things of that ilk, but about a face—the face of a girl. Also her voice. And he found it difficult to decide which he liked most.

He had driven up to the door of Lady Templeton's house, and was standing by his car watching the butler get his things out, when, happening to glance up, he saw a girl looking at him from behind the curtains of a room on the first floor.

"Hullo!" she said. "Are you Mr. Sefton?"

"Guilty," he answered.

"Well, they're all out except me."

"I think I can survive the fact," he said, gravely. "Come down and entertain the new visitor."

"I can't," she remarked, calmly. "I haven't got any clothes on."

Jim Sefton began to laugh.

"That, of course, complicates matters," he murmured.

"Just been bathing," she continued. "Well, so long. I'm not certain that it's quite proper my standing here."

And Jim Sefton, still laughing, had gone indoors to drink a cocktail.

"If she," he reflected, "is a fair sample of the party, this should be a good week-end."

He had come to it more or less on the spur of the moment. He had met Lady Templeton once, but knew nothing about her; and it was Teddy Mason, a very old friend, who, meeting him at lunch that day, had persuaded him to come.

He finished dressing and strolled down-

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stairs to find Teddy moodily contemplating the evening paper.

"Down the drain again," he grunted. "Damned animal beaten by a neck."

"Sorry about that," said Jim. "But look here, Teddy, would you mind giving me a snappy outline of the house-party? Cranks and peculiarities generally."

"Right. First of all, our hostess—Lady Templeton. Cheery soul; face like a horse. Doesn't mind a hoot what she says. Husband is defunct. K.B.E. or something for war work. God knows what it was he did, but he pocketed the stuff all right. Then there's a fellow called Seymour—blighter of the worst description, I think. He's a stockbroker of sorts, and his pal is Joan Merrivale. They're always about together; Seymour gives her husband business tips. There's young Jerry Tollemache—a soldier, who is a thundering good golfer, and a pretty little girl called Janet Drayton, whom he's trying to marry. Top-hole pair—but not a bean between them. How many's that? Oh, yes—then there's Sir John Pettigrew, who is the champion bore of the ages. He's trying to marry Louisa Templeton, but she ain't having any. And Monica and myself."

"Sounds all right," said Jim, "even if a trifle amatory. The only mild criticism I have to make is that this poor lion doesn't seem to have a Christian."

"There's Pat, of course. That makes the number even."

"And who is Pat?" asked Jim Sefton.

"Pat, my dear old boy, is the most adorable of creatures. She is without exception the prettiest girl I have ever seen. And I am desperately in love with her. So we all are."

"I wonder," murmured Jim, with a faint grin.

"What?" demanded Teddy. "Hullo! here she is. Pat, my darling, this is Jim. Miss Brascott—always known as Pat."

"We have already met in the distance," remarked the girl. "Only Teddy, my pet, I had no clothes on. Only a curtain. How d'you do?"

She held out her hand to Jim.

"I've just been telling him about our fellow-boarders," went on Teddy. "He just makes the numbers even."

"Isn't that lucky?" said Pat.

"And so I've got a brilliant idea," he went on. "I will make love to you, and Monica shall teach Jim to punt."

"Nothing doing, Teddy. As I've frequently said, your figure is an outrage, and if you told me you loved me I should burst into hysterics. Go and make me a cocktail—like a darling."

"It would seem, then," murmured Jim, gravely, as Teddy went off resignedly to a side table, "that the Fates have already decided. Short of my declaring undying devotion to our hostess, whose face I am credibly informed is equine in appearance, we seem to be the odd ones out."

"You can always be recalled to London," she said, "if the strain is too great."

"True," he agreed. "Perhaps you'd like me to get a certificate from my tailor as to my figure."

"Hardly necessary," she remarked. "There are some things one can take on trust."

She looked up at him suddenly, an adorable smile twitching round her lips.

"Looking forward to your week-end, Jim? I am."

Which, when all is said and done, was a very suitable moment for the appearance of Lady Templeton.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Sefton?" boomed his hostess, in a voice which was a cross between a fog-horn and a Klaxon. "So glad you could come. You'll have to amuse yourself: I'm far too busy to worry. Besides, if there's one thing that sends me demented, it's being told what you're going to do by somebody else. Who won the three-thirty, Teddy?"

"Moongazer," said Teddy, moodily. "Were you on him?"

"Was I on him? Have I been on a winner for the last fortnight? By the way—Mr. Sefton—Sir John Pettigrew."

Jim shook hands with a middle-aged man of melancholy appearance who had drifted in.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Sefton. Beautiful weather, is it not?"

"John," howled Lady Templeton, "you didn't add—for the time of year."

"My dear Louisa," protested Sir John, mildly, "one must say something."

"It is utterly unnecessary for you ever to say anything, John; the only time that I can recall when it was necessary for you to speak was when I doubled that one no-trump last night and you were my partner. And that is the only time in your life when you remained silent."

"Cheer up, Lady Templeton; you shall have your revenge to-night."

The new arrival, Seymour, was introduced to Jim, who found himself agreeing with Teddy's diagnosis. And then came dinner, where he found himself between Pat and Lady Arkwright. Mrs. Merrivale, a good-looking but hard-faced woman, was opposite, and the other two—having been playing golf—arrived late and full of apologies.

"Topping-looking pair," said Jim to Pat.

"They're rippers—both of them," she answered. "I say, you're not a bit like what I thought you were going to be."

"Indeed!" said Jim, politely.

"Pat, my darling, this is Jim. Miss Brascott—always known as Pat."
"We have already met in the distance," remarked the girl.

"I expected a stern, rather beetle-browed man. You know, the sort of face that shakes you a bit at breakfast, and glowers when your partner makes a mistake at bridge. By the way," she went on, "do you play bridge?"

"Yes: quite a lot. Why?"

"Well—just that—I don't."

"Then—I sha'n't," he remarked.

"Of course," she murmured, "I should hate to spoil your evening."

"Somehow I don't think that's likely," he remarked. "I leave myself entirely in your hands. Though personally I am not at all sure the safest thing wouldn't be for me to play bridge in a room from which you were rigidly excluded."

"But wouldn't that look rather rude?" she said. "A large notice on the door—'Pat not allowed in.'"

"You rather adorable person," he said, suddenly, "I'm most astoundingly glad I met Teddy in the club."

"Are you?" she answered, and stared straight in front of her. Then, with an odd little shake of her head—"Why do they call you a hundred per cent.?"

"What an amazing question!" he laughed.

"I want to know," she insisted.

"I suppose," he answered lightly, "because I've never subscribed to the doctrine that it's necessary to do shady things to pile up money. There are plenty of other men like me."

For a moment or two she sat motionless.

"You'd—you'd hate anyone who did a rotten thing?"

"Hate is a strong word," he said. "I certainly should never feel the same towards that person again. Incidentally," he went on lightly, "that charming woman, Mrs. Merrivale, has an eye like a steel gimlet fixed on us at the moment. I should imagine she has a tongue like the same implement. It might be well, possibly, to discuss the weather, or some other non-controversial topic."

"She's a foul woman," said Pat. "What she doesn't know—she invents. In fact, she's one of the leading members of a society I've invented. It's got such a lovely name, too—the S.P.K.H."

"I'll buy it," laughed Jim.

"It's the Society for Peering through Keyholes in Hopes. It's got twenty members up to date."

"I can add a few," he chuckled.

"We still don't seem to have settled your plans for this evening," she remarked after a pause. "I refuse to be made to sit in a passage and knit. I've got it," she cried, suddenly. "I'll race you in a canoe, using punt poles."

"The result is yours before we start," he laughed. "I can't even propel a punt, much less a canoe."

"You'd better put on your bathing kit," she remarked. "Because you'll certainly upset. And so shall I.

"There's quite a good reach for punting the whole way down past the bathing pool," she continued. "Not too deep."

"I leave it to you, partner," he said. "And I trust the water is warm, if I have got to fall in."

"What mad scheme is this?" boomed his hostess.

"Loss of two canoes, Lady Templeton," laughed Pat. "Mr. Sefton and I are going to race after dinner—using punt poles."

"You should be careful," said Sir John Pettigrew, gravely. "To fall into cold water too soon after a heavy meal——"

"Brain him," bellowed Lady Templeton. "My God! John—for a woman to hear her best dinner described as a heavy meal is a worse insult than to say she means well."

"I'm sure I didn't mean it that way, Louisa," he explained, gravely. "I only wished to point out that a decent interval should be allowed to elapse to permit of the process of digestion taking place. It is not commonly known——"

"John," interrupted Lady Templeton, firmly, "that will do. Any attempt on your part to describe the process of digestion will result in the severance of our friendship. It is a subject in which no one feels the slightest interest, as indeed are all the subjects on which you are prone to discourse. Go on with your ice."

"Don't forget, Pat," sang out Jerry Tollemache, "that the Wallaby Coon Quartette are playing at the club."

"I had forgotten," she admitted. "Do you dance?" She turned to Jim.

"Very fond of it," he answered. "But I don't Charleston, I'm afraid, or do any of these subtleties."

"He's one of the world's star performers," boomed Teddy.

"Then we'll do both," she announced. "Dance first: race after."

"It sounds good to me," said Jim.

"We'll go over in your car," she continued. "And we will tread a measure—and then have a bathe."

"The Queen has spoken," murmured Jim. "Incidentally, from what Teddy told me before dinner, I rather gathered that these two children were in love with one another."

"Beautifully, idiotically so," said Pat. "Why?"

"And are we four going to be the sole performers?"

"More than likely," she answered, a smile twitching round her lips. "Again why?"

"Nothing," he said. "An airy nothing. And I adore the scent you use."

AND so, in the fullness of time, there came to the club four people whose object was ostensibly to tread a measure to the music of the Wallaby Coon Quartette. Now, far be it from me to state that the four excellent niggers who supplied that music were in any way responsible for what happened. Their duty was to supply music: they did. Further, their duty was to supply that particular type of music to which the world dances to-day. And that music is not the music which inspired an earlier generation to take exercise on the ball-room floor. The strains of "John Peel," though admirable for the digestion and unsurpassed for training one's shins for mixed hockey, were unknown to the Wallaby Coon Quartette. Which perhaps was a pity: "John Peel" is an eminently safe dance. Those played by the Wallaby Coon Quartette were not—under existing circumstances.

Given a slim, corsetless girl of astounding prettiness who dances like an angel from heaven: given a man who dances very nearly as well: given a really good band—

She was just bending forward to light her cigarette when their eyes met.

and something is going to happen. Which is doubtless why strong women of repulsive aspect inaugurate campaigns for the suppression of modern dancing. Bless them! They mean well. And in their young days things were different. Dancing was dancing—and corsets were corsets. Pretty grim affairs—both.

Which brings us to the end of the first dance.

She said: " Teddy was right about your dancing."

He said: " How nice of you to say so! But a man with a club-foot could dance with you."

Then they had a whisky-and-soda and an orangeade respectively and danced for the second time.

She said: " Let's go outside and get cool." And her hand was ice-cold.

He said: " Right-ho," and offered her his cigarette-case. That was when they were half-way across the lawn. Further, he lit a match. And she was just bending forward to light her cigarette when their eyes met. For just that length of time which it takes for a match to burn out on a still night they stood there motionless, staring at one another. Then the match fell to the ground.

She said: "Perhaps I'd better light my own."

He said: "Certainly. Here is the box."

She said: "Isn't it pretty here? I love those big trees opposite."

He said: "Yes. There's no place like England."

And once again in the darkness their eyes met.

She said: "Jim. For God's sake! We're being mad."

He said: "Are we?" And his voice was shaking.

Then the music started again and they danced for the third time. And the fat was in the fire.

She said almost inaudibly: "I'm going to powder my nose——"

He said: "I'll wait here for you."

Then he ordered another whisky-and-soda, said some incoherency to young Tollemache, who was passing, and sat down dazedly.

HE was vaguely conscious that people were moving about—that the band was playing another tune. Also that Tollemache had made some remark as he went by. But everything was jumbled—like a dream: a dream in which only one thing was real—the girl he had just danced with.

Rational thought was beyond him: nothing mattered in the whole universe except a girl with her eyes full of an excitement as wild as his own—eyes that had stared into his over a flickering match.

"What's that? Over, is it?"

He looked up at Tollemache, and then got slowly to his feet.

"The girls are waiting for us in the car, sir."

"Right: I'll come along."

They were both at the back, and he glanced at Pat as he got in. She was sitting very still, with her eyes closed—and during the drive she never spoke.

He took the car round to the garage; then, still incoherent, came back to the house to look for her. The hall was empty; the other two had vanished—the bridgers still bridged. Where was Pat? Where had she gone to?

He sat down on the leather fender and lit a cigarette. And suddenly saw her coming down the stairs, wearing a bathing wrap, and on her head a blue cap that matched the colour of her eyes.

"Pat darling," he whispered as she came up to him.

She gave a little shake of her head.

"Jim—for God's sake, don't look at me like that. Go on upstairs now and put on your bathing kit. I've got to do something, don't you understand? I'll go mad if I don't. Hurry. I'll wait for you here."

"Pat," he whispered once again.

"Go on," she said, in a low, tense voice. "Go on and change. Or I'll hate you."

And sat staring in front of her, slim legs dangling from the fender as he went upstairs.

"Let's be mad, Jim," she said, as he came down five minutes later. "Really crazy mad. Come on. I'll race you across the lawn."

Caught the contagion of her mood, and beat her by ten yards.

"You can't run," he mocked.

"You wait till you get in the canoe, my lad," she laughed back.

He made a dive at her as she came up, and missed her. And a moment or two later saw her balancing herself easily in a canoe ten yards out from the bank.

He heard her voice—laughter in it—"Come on, Jim—if you can get as far. Your pole is in the punt. And I've taken the cushions out of the canoe."

He found the pole; got into the canoe; swayed ominously. He began to laugh himself. Jove! but it was ripping doing things like this with Pat. Mad things: fool things.

"Bet you I'll beat you, once I can get the bally boat to move," he cried.

"It's tied up, you jink," and they both laughed again.

Mad things: fool things. What did it matter? What did anything matter? He untied the canoe: dug in the pole: shot out into mid-stream with a fearful lurch—sat down heavily in the boat.

"Who says that's nothing?" he demanded, as he got alongside her. "I'm going to race sitting down."

"Not allowed," she ordained. "Stand up, Mr. Man."

"But, Pat," he said, "this is simply too wonderful for words. And I'm not going to get up: I'm going to sit here all night and look at you."

He saw her face—a strange look on it for one moment, and then she was gone. Mocking him from five yards in front. "You think you can beat me! Guess again, my lad, guess again. I won the Little Shrimpton competition for this: first prize a bag of nuts."

Mad things: fool things: with life pounding through his veins, and a slender white-limbed girl as mad as he. Elusive, tantalizing in the darkness: he'd catch her: he'd beat her: it would be an omen.

He dug in his pole, described a half-circle, and came to a position of comparative rest facing the opposite way.

"Excellent." Her voice floated back to him. "But it's better to go towards the winning post, and not away from it."

" You wait till I get going, confound you," he retorted. " This dam' pole is about ten feet too long."

He shot round in another circle and rammed the bank.

" I've stubbed my toe and I've grazed my knee—and I think it's the most drivelling occupation I've ever indulged in."

" Yah ! " yelled Pat. And then came a stifled " Oh ! " and a splash.

" Told you so," cried Jim, triumphantly. " That will larn you to mock at a poor beginner."

He shot out into the stream again.

" Slow but sure does it. All right ? "

And there was no answer.

" Pat ! Pat ! " His voice rose to a shout, the sudden sharp shout of fear. Ahead floated the canoe : he could see it dimly in the darkness. But of the girl there was no sign.

There came a second splash, and a man who hurled himself through the water in a frenzy of madness, with sick terror gripping his mind and the strength of two men in his limbs. She could swim : she said she could swim. What had happened ? God ! what had happened ?

He threw himself at the overturned canoe, and as he did so he felt her underneath. So that was it : somehow or other she'd been imprisoned under the boat. He righted the canoe : got his hands to her head. So full of life a moment ago. And now—sodden, inanimate. Oh, God—not that, not that ! She wasn't dead : she couldn't be dead.

He got her to the bank : hauled her out. Fool and idiot—he'd brought her to the wrong one. The house was on the other side. Thank heavens ! he knew what to do, anyway.

He started artificial respiration, with the terror still gripping at his very soul.

But she shouldn't die : he wouldn't let her.

" Good Gawd; sir ! What's happened ? "

He glanced up to see a man and a woman standing on the towpath watching him.

" We heard your shout from our cottage yonder."

" Is the pore young lady dead ? " said the woman, breathlessly.

" Not if I can save her," answered Jim, grimly. " Pay attention, will you, please ? As soon as she starts to breathe I shall bring her to your cottage. Will you get a bed ready with warm blankets ? Fill any hot-water bottles you have. If you can find a couple of bricks—heat them and wrap them in flannel. And get a doctor."

His voice was cool and collected : he might have been ordering dinner in his club. And so the effect was instantaneous, as it always was when Jim Sefton was in a tight corner. Two frightened yokels became two ordinary beings again, capable of doing what they were told in the way they were told—and doing it at once.

They left him : lights appeared in the cottage : he heard the man going off at a run towards Henley for a doctor.

AND then, twenty minutes later, quite suddenly, a great shuddering gasp shook the girl, and a wild primitive triumph surged up in the man who had fought Death and beaten him. But outwardly not a trace of it showed : his face, stern and set, did not relax.

Another convulsive gasp : and another. Breathing had begun again. Quickly he picked her up in his arms and ran towards the cottage, hardly conscious of the stones that cut his feet.

" Is the bed ready ? " he cried, curtly.

" Here, sir," said the woman. " This way. And there's the hot blanket."

" Bring the bottle," he cried. " And the bricks, if you've got 'em."

" Here they are, sir," answered the woman.

" Roll her in the blankets. That's right."

" She's going to live, sir ? " cried the woman.

" Of course she's going to live," came a cheerful voice from the door, and the doctor bustled in with a keen look at Pat.

" Excellent," he went on, after a brief examination. " Pulse getting almost normal. Why—I'm hardly wanted. Take this hot-water bottle, Mrs. Clarke—and refill it."

And then, as the woman left the room, he looked at Jim. And bit off the cheerful remark on the tip of his tongue. For the face of the man he looked at was the face of a man who had been through the Valley of the Shadow.

" What happened ? " he said, quietly.

" God knows," answered Jim. " She fell out of a canoe, and somehow or other got caught underneath. We were racing."

" How long before you got to her ? "

" Twenty seconds : perhaps more."

" Lucky you knew what to do. . . .

" Good God, man ! " he went on, suddenly, " look at your feet. Mrs. Clarke—hot water, please, in a basin—at once."

" Damn my feet," said Jim. " Is she all right ? "

" Quite," said the doctor, curtly. " You saved her life, of course. Now sit down, and put your feet in that. They're cut to pieces. And I don't want a case of tetanus at this time of night. Let 'em soak for a bit, and then we'll use the iodine."

In silence Jim Sefton did as he was bid, though his eyes never left the girl's face.

So it had come at last —the thing which up-to-date mothers with marriageable daughters had angled for in vain. He was in love —wildly, desperately in love. At the club, dancing with her, it had been passion—the primitive, overwhelming desire of a man for a woman. Now it was something far more than that: it was the biggest thing of his life.

"Jim!" A shout from outside cut into his thoughts. "Jim!"

"Here, Teddy," answered Jim Sefton, and the next instant Teddy and Jerry Tollemache came dashing in.

"My God! old man," cried Teddy, very white in the face, "we're all nearly off our heads."

And then he broke off, staring with dilated eyes at Pat.

"She's all right, Teddy," said Jim, quietly. "It was a bit of a close shave, though."

"Drowning," Jerry stammered. "Pat nearly drowned."

"Into the next room all of you," ordered the doctor, curtly. "She's coming to."

"Canoe was brought back empty," said Teddy, shakily. "We've been sick with anxiety."

"She upset somehow," answered Jim. "And I just got to her in time. She was under the boat."

"You look done in, old man," said Teddy, and Jim gave a short laugh.

"Artificial restoration for three-quarters of an hour is no joke," he answered.

The door opened and closed behind the doctor.

"Quite all right," he announced. "But I don't want her to be moved to-night. Could some lady from the house-party bring over her clothes and that sort of thing?"

"Is the pore young lady dead?" said the woman, breathlessly.

"My wife will, like a shot," cried Teddy. "And she could stop here with her, if necessary."

"That would be excellent," said the doctor. "I shall remain here myself for a time, of course. But by to-morrow she should be perfectly fit again. Incidentally, Mr. Sefton, she wants to thank you. And after that I would suggest a very large whisky-and-soda."

"I'll go to her," said Jim, quietly.

She was lying very still as he entered the room, staring at him gravely.

"You seem to have saved my life, Jim?" she said, in a low voice. "Thank you."

"Not if I can save her," answered Jim, grimly.

"My dear!" he whispered, shakily. "Oh, my dear!"

Very tenderly he bent down towards her, and a sudden uncontrollable shudder ran through her.

"No," she said, turning her face away, "you're not to kiss me."

"But I love you, Pat," he said, gently. "I love you."

"Oh, my God!" she breathed. "Go away, please. Go away. I've got something I must tell you," she went on, wildly, "something you'll hate me for."

"It will keep till to-morrow," he said, gravely. "Go to sleep now, Pat dear; Monica is coming over with your clothes."

He paused for a moment at the door; she was lying rigid, with her head turned towards the wall. Then, with a faintly-puzzled look on his face, he joined the others. And it was much later in the evening that he found himself standing with Teddy, having a final night-cap.

"By the way, Teddy," he remarked, "is Miss Brascott engaged?"

His companion gave a sudden grin.

"Not that I'm aware of, old boy," he answered. "As yet."

Jim Sefton finished his drink and went upstairs. What had the girl meant? What was it she had to tell him that he'd hate her for?

And suddenly he stood very still. From along the passage came a man's voice—Seymour's.

"Our little Pat has played her cards pretty well. She's got her millionaire all right."

He heard Joan Merrivale laugh, and then a door shut. For a while he stood there, his face an expressionless mask; should he go along and flay Seymour alive? Then, with a little shrug of his shoulders, he turned and went to his own room. What did the words of a thing of his type

matter? The swine: the rotten-minded swine. As if Pat was that sort of girl. As if Pat——

And he was still indignantly denying it mentally when he woke next morning.

"JIM, will you take me out on the river? I told you last night that I'd got something to say to you."

Pat—a very subdued and thoughtful-eyed Pat—stood facing him.

"Why, of course," he said, eagerly. "But are you certain you're feeling fit enough?"

"I'm absolutely all right," she said, quietly. "And I want to tell you a story. After that you can bring me back again."

"I'll get a punt ready," he answered.

In silence she followed him to the boat-house.

"You paddle," she said. "And don't go too far; you'll probably want to come back fairly quickly."

The boat had drifted into mid-stream before she spoke again.

"There was once upon a time a girl—and a pretty rotten kind of girl at that. The sort of girl that everybody was pleased to see because she dressed well, and was moderately pretty and amusing. Lots of men fell in love with her, which was quite amusing. Because they none of them had any money. And she wasn't the type of girl who would marry a man without money. Unless perhaps she'd been really in love with him. But then, she never was."

She shivered a little, and stared at a passing steamer.

"She wanted a millionaire. She often said so—half in jest and half in earnest. And one day, staying at a house-party, she heard after lunch that a real, live millionaire was arriving that afternoon."

Once again she gave a little shiver.

"There wasn't much this girl didn't know about men, and I've told you—haven't I?—that she was pretty rotten. So she determined, then and there, to do everything in her power to catch that millionaire. She pleaded a headache when the rest of the party went out—so as to be alone in the house when he arrived. And then she introduced herself to him in a way which she guessed would intrigue him.

"After dinner they went to a dance. Her object was to appeal to that man, and she knew perfectly well how to do it. She'd been told he wasn't the marrying sort, so she thought—she thought——"

For a moment she faltered, while Jim, the paddle idle in his hands, watched her quietly.

"She thought," went on the girl, "that she might get him into such a position that he'd feel bound to marry her. He was a very straight man, you see; a hundred per cent. straight. And if he could be made to compromise her; if he could be made to go to her room——"

She broke off suddenly, and covered her face with her hands.

"Now you know," she said, in a stifled voice. "Take me back, please."

"And why," said Jim, after a pause, "have you told me this? You've gained your result without employing the means you proposed."

"Does it much matter?" she answered, wearily.

"Was it because I happened to save your life?" he insisted.

She shook her head.

"No; it wasn't that." She stared at him steadily. "At that dance, Jim Sefton, the girl found herself caught in her own trap. At first she couldn't understand it; at first she almost struggled against it. All her life up till then she'd forced herself to be cold and calculating, and now suddenly the whole of her horizon had shifted. But she didn't struggle for long: she felt too crazy with happiness. So she tried to pretend to herself that she hadn't been rotten at all. And she succeeded—for a little. And it was only when she saw him coming into the room with his feet all bandaged up; saw the look in his eyes; saw him bending over her, that she knew she couldn't pretend any more. He'd have to know. Now he does."

And then at last Jim Sefton spoke, and his voice was not quite steady.

"Yes, Pat—he does. And he knows another thing, too: that compared to your standard he's not a hundred per cent., but about fifty."

In her eyes there dawned a look of wonder.

"Jim," she stammered. "Jim—I—I don't understand."

"Don't you?" he laughed. "You will just as soon as I can get this confounded old tub into that backwater. Don't cry, you darling; don't cry."

"I'm not," she said, indignantly. "It's the glare. And if you give me that other paddle we might get there rather quicker. Out of the glare, I mean."

Dancing round the World

By

ANNA PAVLOVA

Illustrated by
A. K. MACDONALD

Mme. Anna Pavlova.

TO dance—ah! it is that impulse which, at some time or other, has made children of us all, has banished dull care and sorrow, has filled our hearts with throbbing exultation. The dance music has caused our feet to tingle and keep time, and has brought with it a tumultuous desire to feel our bodies swaying rhythmically to a lilting, haunting tune. Why?

Ever since the dawn of time, human beings have danced as an outlet for their emotions when they have been too great for expression in words. So the poetry of motion is an international language—only the dialects vary in their different countries.

Thus the true characteristics of various nations are reflected in their attitude towards dancing and in their national dances. This relationship may easily be traced around the world, for, although varying modes of dancing obtain in certain specific countries, as do different languages, yet these are influenced quite as directly by an influx of

Folk-dancing by Russian peasants.

immigrants as is the national tongue itself, and in the same manner. For example, if the new race introduced grace where before was chiefly technical perfection, the national dances would not immediately become all graceful. However, gradually a noticeable element of grace would commence to manifest itself, and thus they would be immensely improved from the artistic point of view.

It would be almost possible to colour a blank map of the globe so as to show the manner in which national dances obtain in various parts of the world. Actually it is more correct, broadly speaking, to assert that certain types of dancing hold sway among different *races* rather than among different nations, although, of course, this may not be an infallible law.

Why is it, then, that the different races have prevailing types of dancing by which each may be distinguished from the other? I think it is because the best characteristics of each race find outlet through its particular dances. The versatile brilliancy of the Frenchman and all Latin races obtains suitable expression in the gracefully intricate movements of those dances which are curiously their own. In contrast, the clog-dance of Holland, with its jolly, laughing clatter, is the truest possible indication of the open-hearted happiness of the Netherlander. Again, what could better express the feelings of the fiery Highlander than his own excited sword-dance? Then there is the old English dancing, which seems to have been inspired by the very spirit of another and slower age—that of grace, courtliness, and chivalry. I think it might almost be said that these distinctive movements are the personality of the race translated into rhythmic motion.

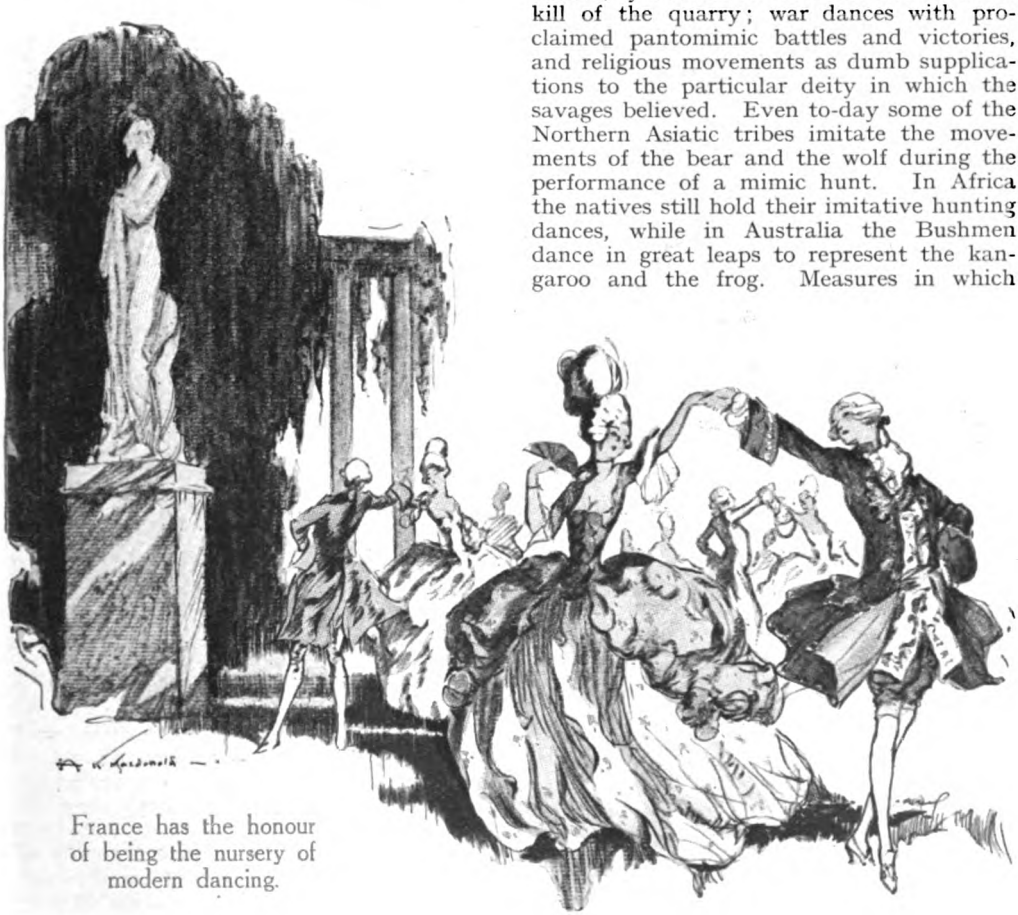
A factor which I consider brings its influence to bear upon the art of the dancer is the national costume. Russian top-boots, for example, are not the easiest things in which to dance; but their very ability to move gracefully in spite of the weight and clumsiness of their attire enables Russians to be acknowledged by the majority as the world's most graceful exponents of the art. In this way, and with the assistance of the facile Slavonic brain, are developed that strength of sinew and suppleness of muscle which enable our ballet dancers to perform evolutions which would seem to any other nation at first sight to be almost impossible.

I have often been asked what, in my opinion, are the reasons for the popular theory that the Slavs make the finest classical dancers in the world. Perhaps it is because we live for the moment so much more than do, for example, you English. While dancing, a Slav can allow no other thought than the perfect translation of the movements he performs. Nothing else matters save the pure cadence of the muscular motion, the rhythm of which he is enjoying; and it is because he can surrender himself so completely to his art that the Slav exhibits it so beautifully. While yet another cause may be traced to the fact that all Russians are ardent lovers of music and poetry. Thus there is always to be found a close relationship between the excellence of a nation's dancing and the excellence of its arts, and our inherent love of these things, too, probably helps us to perfection. Then there is still another fact. We Russians dance because to us dancing is a true ideal, one perfect in itself. Possibly this is an outcome of the fact that Russia is the home of folk-dancing, and that for centuries we have immortalized in action-stories those beautiful legends of folk-lore which other nations have confined to books.

France has the honour of being the nursery of modern measures, for in that country originated the majority of the dances which are universal to-day. However, the art of dancing first " grew up " and was recognized at its real value in ancient Greece. The stately measures of Greek dancing still survive, and are familiar to everyone as those of the most artistically graceful expressions of movement that it is possible to conceive.

In utter contrast is the absolute abandon of the modern American " jazz "—yet I would not really condemn it. We all know this to be a form of modern dancing which is a typical reflection of the desire of the moment for immediate expression. The time which was so gladly given to perfect the old dances cannot be spared in our rushing, workaday world of the present; so, in an intense desire to translate in motion that yearning for expression which is somewhere within each one of us, the strange rush of the present-day ballroom has achieved its popularity. It is a kind of reaction, perhaps, from the rigid formality of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and indeed from the whole of the artificiality and restrained conditions under which modern life goes on. I verily believe that many of us would develop either into automatons or nerve-wrecks unless there were some outlet for this kind of emotion—for our finer artistic instincts—even if that outlet be only " jazz." At least this modern fancy satisfies the absolute necessity for a form of expression which may be learned quickly, performed easily, and which leaves the dancer healthily tired in body without any appreciable exercise of his brain. During the working day all personality is ruthlessly repressed, and it is a boon indeed to all who work for their living that there is a mode of exercising it during the evenings.

Although there is no posing in the modern dance—it is far too rapid for that—yet posing plays a great part in the historical interests of the world's measures. Regular primitive dancing seems to have been almost entirely a succession of poses—veritable " plays without words." There were hunting dances, symbolical of the chase and eventual kill of the quarry; war dances with proclaimed pantomimic battles and victories, and religious movements as dumb supplications to the particular deity in which the savages believed. Even to-day some of the Northern Asiatic tribes imitate the movements of the bear and the wolf during the performance of a mimic hunt. In Africa the natives still hold their imitative hunting dances, while in Australia the Bushmen dance in great leaps to represent the kangaroo and the frog. Measures in which



France has the honour of being the nursery of modern dancing.

The most artistically graceful expression of movement is seen in Greek dancing.

ticularly in later Roman times, before the universal preaching of the Gospel, sacred dancing played an important part in the worship of the gods and goddesses. With the spread of Christianity, however, it was looked upon askance, and most of the churches have raved against the sinful "Devil's procession" at one time or another. The puritanical prejudices of the Church in England during the time of Cromwell were so bitter that the maypole—a dance which expresses the true and laughing spirit of England better than any other—was actually banned by your gloomy Protector on the ground that it produced the unseemly and forbidden emotion of pleasure!

animals were represented have always been features of the dancing of uncivilized tribes who depended for their food upon the propitiation of the gods of the chase.

Such dances are only a step removed from religious dances. Indeed, they are often presided over by the priests or witch-doctors of their tribes. In ancient history, and par-

Here we touch upon a point of especial interest. It is obvious that dances of various kinds are the translation into movement of certain emotions out of which they are conceived. How much, then, are they dependent for their grace and accuracy of expression upon the state of mind which they themselves produce by reason of their

measured rhythm! The delightful physical action produces an enjoyable thrill of excitement, and also the rhythmic cadence of bodily movement gives a sense of extreme satisfaction in itself.

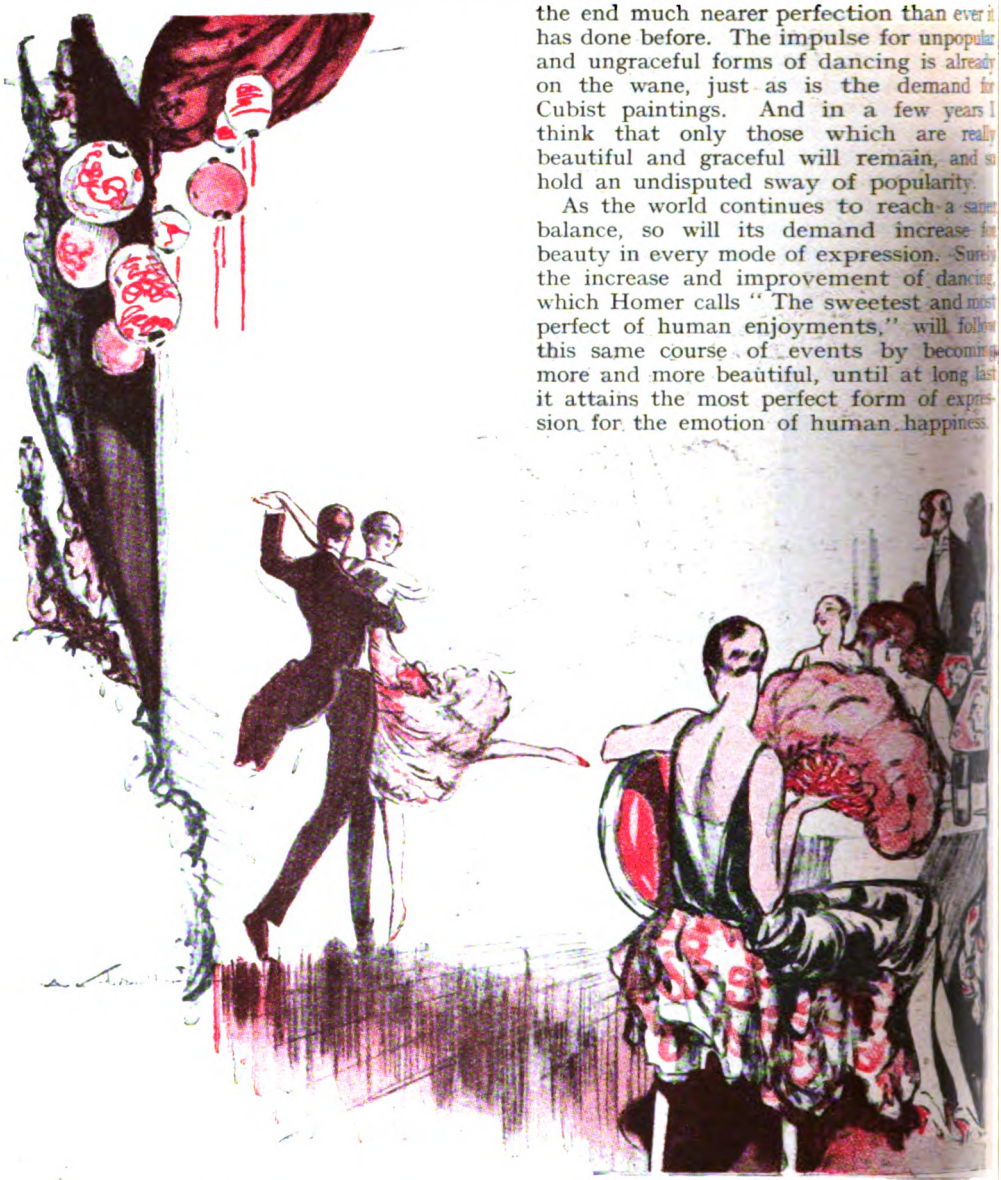
What could be more delightful to the ear than the melody of a dance tune? Does it not steal upon our critical senses like a delicious, fragrant perfume? Cannot most of us lose ourselves in its refreshing balm? The modern orchestra is the perfected result of evolution, and adds the final touch to the enjoyment of present-day dancing. Music of some sort has always accompanied the measures of even the most primitive tribes.

Often have I been asked *why*, in my own estimation, there is this tendency in every human being to dance to a lilting tune—in fact, why rhythmic movement is so natural to us. Well, the ancients believed that the movements of dancing and the desire to dance were directly controlled by the movements of the heavenly bodies; and who, even in these days of enlightenment, would condemn their surmise as entirely incorrect? The moon causes the waves to dance (prosaically we call the phenomena "tides"). Sound dances, light dances—even the celestial bodies themselves revolve in their orbits. Ah! to dance is a heavenly impulse.

Our blood is set dancing by our pulses, and when our hearts beat quicker under the influence of any emotion—be it love, hate, or what you will—there is instantly set up an accelerated movement which induces our feet to tingle, and a longing at once surges within us to express our feelings through the poetry of movement.

The Spanish bull-fight dance.

It is an interesting study to consider, metaphorically speaking, whither we are dancing. In other words, is dancing, as an



Modern Jazz—an exhibition Fox-trot in a London Cabaret.

art, progressing, is it stagnant, or has it now passed its zenith as a mode of beautiful expression? I think, myself, it is still improving. I would even venture to prophesy. I believe that dancing is at present passing through a period of transition, to arrive in the end much nearer perfection than ever it has done before. The impulse for unpopular and ungraceful forms of dancing is already on the wane, just as is the demand for Cubist paintings. And in a few years I think that only those which are really beautiful and graceful will remain, and so hold an undisputed sway of popularity.

As the world continues to reach a saner balance, so will its demand increase for beauty in every mode of expression. Surely the increase and improvement of dancing, which Homer calls "The sweetest and most perfect of human enjoyments," will follow this same course of events by becoming more and more beautiful, until at long last it attains the most perfect form of expression for the emotion of human happiness.

So it is by the steady elimination of everything which is ugly—thoughts and deeds no less than tangible things—and by the substitution of others of true and lasting beauty, that the whole progress of humanity proceeds.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

By Anthony Armstrong

(The well-known "A.A." of "Punch")

Illustrated by
L. G. ILLINGWORTH

"I've discovered the Elixir of Life!" the old man cackled confidentially.

AN earnest young man with large horn-rimmed spectacles and a knapsack turned a corner of the main road and came in sight of the village. He looked something like a tramp, a low fellow of the baser sort; but actually he was an Oxford undergraduate, engaged on a walking tour in the New Forest in order to "put in a little quiet reading for an examination." During the summer months England swarms with earnest young men who are "putting in a little quiet reading for an examination." Some of them do it in seaside resorts, some in the depths of the country, and some merely in bar-parlours.

Julius, however, was undergoing a temporary reaction against bar-parlours. He had recently determined to go "on the water-wagon" for a bit and hoped he wouldn't slip off before the end of his walking tour. Indeed, he was now at the very moment looking for a cottage where he could get a glass of

milk, before eating his sandwich lunch, and so avoid having to visit the village inn. Not that he disliked village inns; only, having been well brought up, he had a rooted dislike to calling for a glass of milk, or even a ginger-beer, in the bar of a public-house. Besides, his seat on the water-wagon wasn't so secure that he might not forget himself and order beer from sheer force of habit.

On his right he soon noticed an open gate which led up an overgrown garden path to a dilapidated cottage, and the owner of this would, he felt sure, be able to give him the milk he wanted. Accordingly he went up to the cottage door and rapped.

Nothing happened at first save that a mangy white cat came round the corner and stared at him indecisively. He rapped again, and two more listless cats appeared and sat down at his feet. Finally the door was opened by a very old man with a long white beard. He, as well as his visitor, wore large horn-rimmed spectacles, and the two peered at one another for a bit like a couple of Daimlers drawn up head on. He was dressed in a long red robe worked with black thread triangles. His general appearance was rather startling, and not at all what one expects to find in the English countryside.

"Can you—er—give me a drink of milk, please?" asked Julius, wondering if the old man was quite sane.

"Milk?" repeated the other, as if trying to remember when he had heard the word before. "Milk? Milk? Oh, yes, yes, milk," he went on, getting hold of the idea at last. "Come on in, young sir."

The young sir came on in, rather doubtfully. The interior of the cottage was dark and was the strangest place he had ever been in. There were cauldrons, phials, and a huge glass retort, and a skeleton hanging on a nail behind the door in the manner of a disused overcoat. Several more feeble-looking cats were asleep in a row on the back of a stuffed crocodile, and a skull took the place of a clock on the mantelpiece. Julius was so upset by the old man's scheme of furnishing that he could hardly drink the milk which his host offered him in a cracked glass, after first beginning absent-mindedly to pour it into a saucer as if his visitor were one of his many cats.

"Are you interested in chemistry?" Julius began at last, speaking with the superiority of the young man to whom things like Di-methyl-meta-benzoic Acid are practically relations, and wondering if that was the explanation of everything about him.

"No!" muttered the old man. "No! Not chemistry." He paused; then, "Alchemy," he whispered surprisingly in the other's ear. "I'm the last of the old alchemists."

"Oh—er—indeed!" said Julius, finishing his milk hurriedly and realizing suddenly that he was actually dealing with a madman. He made a movement to go, but the other clutched his sleeve.

"I've discovered the *Elixir of Life!*" he cackled confidentially. "All by myself. You see all these cats? Well, I've made the Elixir from them. All these cats have only one life left now." He bent his head to his listener and whipped a little bottle of pink fluid out of his garments. "All cats should have nine lives, but *I've got the other eight* from each of them—bottled in this Elixir. Concentrated Essence of Life! Aha! So am I, don't we?" he added lucidly.

"I must be going," stammered Julius wildly, backing to the door. "About the milk, can I offer you something?"

"Wouldn't you like to buy a bottle of the Elixir?" crooned the other persuasively, following him up.

Julius saw a way of settling for the milk and getting away at the same time.

"How much?"

"Half a crown!" returned the old man. "Concentrated Essence of Life!" he added, so that his prospective customer might be under no delusion as to what he was getting.

ONE minute later Julius was walking hurriedly down the garden path, looking back apprehensively over his shoulder. He shut the gate carefully behind him, and as he did he noticed something, short and to the point, chalked up thereon. It was "*Loony*." Julius moved a little quicker.

Some way down the road he eventually slackened his pace. He was annoyed with himself. To have received only a drink of milk and a bottle of a madman's "Elixir" in exchange for half a crown was not good finance. He felt that for a chap who was on intimate terms with Di-methyl-meta-benzoic Acid he had been had for a mug.

A little farther on he sat down to have his lunch and to commune with a pocket Darwin. But before he did so he took the little bottle out of his pocket and examined it. It looked and smelt like coloured water, and, judging from its donor's sanity, probably was. He laid it down beside him, ate his sandwiches, and began to read some snappy bits about the Lamarckian Theory and the probable descent of man from the anthropomorphous apes. It was pretty tough sort of stuff, and soon he was glad of an excuse to raise his eyes at the sound of footsteps on the main road.

To his surprise he observed that some illustrative point was being given to his

reading by the appearance, from the direction of the cottage he had just left, of an itinerant Italian organ-grinder, looking rather annoyed and with a monkey on his shoulder. Julius studied the monkey, who was nattily dressed in blue and red, with much interest, which was more or less returned by the monkey. He wondered what on earth Darwin could have seen in an animal like that. . . . .

"Good-a mornin'!" remarked the Italian with an eye to business, seeing that his monkey had apparently made a conquest. "You like-a da music?"

"No," said Julius.

"You give-a da monk one pennee and I play-a?"

"No," said Julius.

"You give-a da monk two pennee and I *not* play-a?" went on the Italian, spotting an eventual basis for negotiation. The monkey, nudged in the ribs at this point, hopped across the grass to Julius and, sitting on the Darwinian Theory, raised its pill-box hat politely and extended a palm.

"You give-a, I no play-a," reiterated the Italian, definitely laying down the main lines of agreement.

Julius felt in his pocket and took out a sixpence, which he proffered to the animal. The monkey, however, who was no financier, seemed to prefer two sponge-cakes left over from Julius's meal, and his master let loose a flood of Italian invective at such lack of perception. But Julius, whose eye had fallen on the Elixir, was struck with a wild idea. Swiftly uncorking the bottle, he surreptitiously poured a good dose of the fluid on one of the sponge-cakes, which, together with the sixpence, he then handed to the monkey.

The next moment the monkey was back on his master's shoulder, the sixpence was in the Italian's pocket, and the sponge-cake was in the monkey. Julius, feeling he had perhaps been rather a fool, was self-consciously trying to pick up the threads of Evolution through torrents of Italian gratitude, while the monkey, exploring its back teeth with a finger, seemed none the worse for the doctored sponge-cake.

The Italian moved off, still pouring out blessings, but had

Julius sat open-mouthed and watched. There was now no doubt that the monkey was bigger, and it was getting less and less like a monkey every second.

barely gone a few steps when he stopped and spoke to the monkey in such an aggrieved tone that Julius looked up again.

Then he rubbed his eyes and stared hard; for it seemed to him that either the man had skilfully changed his original monkey or that it was much bigger than it had been. Apparently, however, the Italian was just as surprised as Julius, for he now placed the monkey on the ground and stood apostrophizing it in tones of growing amazement.

Julius sat open-mouthed and watched. In a few seconds he found he could hardly believe his eyes. There was now no doubt that the monkey was bigger. It was actually almost up to the Italian's middle, and the curve of its back was disappearing and its legs straightening. It was getting less and less like a monkey every second, and already its clothes, with the exception of the hat, had burst off its increasing frame.

When it was up to its master's shoulder and peering into his face in a perplexed manner, the whole thing proved too much for the Italian, who dropped the organ, ejaculated "Maria!" and departed at high speed across country, the question of hedges and ditches appearing to worry him but little.

The monkey—or rather the late monkey, for it was now more like a queer and excessively ugly human being—turned round and came slowly back to where Julius sat half-fascinated and half-afraid on the grass. It bore a strong resemblance to a friend of his in Balliol College who was called "The Missing Link."

Opposite him the creature stopped, and regarded him for a moment with bright but puzzled eyes. It was an extraordinary sight. In fact, it looked so forlorn, clad as it was in nothing but a tiny red pill-box hat, that Julius, blinking behind his glasses, felt he ought to do something about it. So he extended the last sponge-cake and remarked:—

"Come along, then, good chap."

The good chap came along then and ate the cake.

"Eh—Eh—Eh—Ek. Ek—Ek!" it remarked in the manner of an old uncle of Julius's whose speech, owing to a misfit in false teeth, was not quite what it used to be.

"Exactly," responded Julius, nervously.

"Nek Nek Nek!" went on the ape-man, sitting down on the grass and preparing to be friends. It was looking more like a normal human being than ever, and Julius was quite scared.

"Gik—Gik—Gik! Wuk—Wuk?" it added, anxiously and slowly. Julius's dazed brain-centres began to work once more. Either he had gone quite out of his mind, he argued—for he was "on the wagon" and no mere glass of milk could account for the phenomenon—or else all must be the result of the Elixir, which was not pink water after all. But then, surely it should have merely made the monkey live for ever, according to the best traditions of alchemy, whereas the animal was slowly turning—had almost turned, in fact—into a man.

AT this point his eye fell on the book beside him, and he had a sudden flash of inspiration. Evolution! Concentrated Essence of Life, the mad old man had called the stuff—essence of cats' superfluous lives. Instead of manifesting itself in the shape of eternal life, it had broken out in concentrated Life-force; in a word, in evolution. This monkey had apparently become in a quarter of an hour what it might have become in a quarter of a million years.

Julius was so amazed at this discovery that he could hardly speak for several minutes, but sat looking at his strange companion, pursing up its lips and giving vent to noises. Then he realized with a further shock that speech was what the ape-man was actually now attempting.

"Maw! Maw!" it gibbered, holding out a hand and exhibiting a strong desire for a further pull at the bottle of Elixir.

"No," said Julius, firmly, and got up to go, almost in a state of panic. But the animal, now completely human and very well-developed at that, detained him forcibly by the sleeve. It was practically indistinguishable from any other human except for what might be called a marked eccentricity of dress.

"More bottle!" it distinctly achieved at last, and held out a well-formed hand. Julius, not knowing where on earth the thing would stop if it drank any more, struggled to get away, and was instantly overpowered by a movement which would have been considered rough even in a prize-fight. Held firmly down by one muscled arm, he watched the creature take a good drink, after which it rummaged in his knapsack and proceeded to put on his spare best clothes. He felt as though his mind was going. He tried to think of his eminently common-sense tutor at Oxford, of Di-methyl-meta-benzoic Acid and other reasonable things, but without much success. Even his tutor, he considered, could not have dealt with this situation. For an earnest and serious-minded young man he found his position incredible.

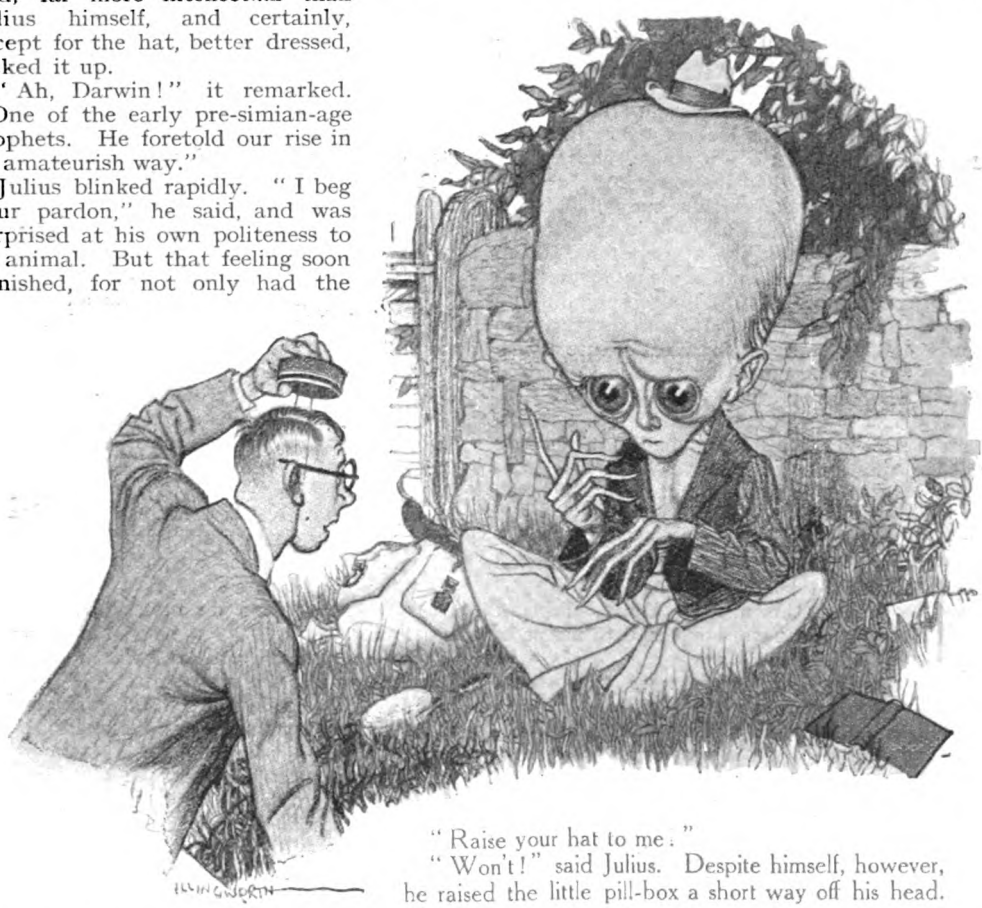
The second dose of the Elixir apparently did the creature a great deal of good.

"That's better!" it said in perfect English, but with a clipped, jerky accent. "You look rather old-fashioned," it went on, surveying him curiously, and Julius, who never in his wildest moment had

thought he would live to be called old-fashioned by an organ-grinder's monkey, sat up in amazement. His book fell off his knees at the movement, and the creature, who was now, an outside observer would have said, far more intellectual than Julius himself, and certainly, except for the hat, better dressed, picked it up.

"Ah, Darwin!" it remarked. "One of the early pre-simian-age prophets. He foretold our rise in an amateurish way."

Julius blinked rapidly. "I beg your pardon," he said, and was surprised at his own politeness to an animal. But that feeling soon vanished, for not only had the fragile, as though unaccustomed to labour. In short, it now appeared to be a vast intellect in a somewhat decadent human frame—a sort of superman such as might conceivably be produced in thousands of years.



"Raise your hat to me."
"Won't!" said Julius. Despite himself, however, he raised the little pill-box a short way off his head.

Creature changed so much that it was a new being, but Julius was forced to admit, as he looked at the piercing eyes, broad forehead, and obvious stamp of advanced intellect on the features, that it was a very superior being indeed.

"Yes," it went on in still more clipped tones; "Darwin foreshadowed vaguely the evolution of Us from the monkey people, when the so-called human race, then existent, had extinguished itself in international warfare."

"Exactly," said Julius, faintly, his brain struggling with this conception of the future, as outlined by a Being whom he now regarded with a species of awe. It had developed further in many ways ever since it had wrested the bottle from him. The hands were white and the whole body more

"The purely physical laws of the survival of the fittest," went on the Being, "did not apply to scientific and chemical warfare, and so what was left of the first human race deteriorated into mere underground parasites, leaving the world to Us."

It placed the tips of its fingers together and looked at him like a college professor explaining a knotty point to a class of pupils. Julius, gathering courage, wondered whether he might not perhaps learn something of interest, something which would give him quite a status in any argument about the Millennium or Human Development. A straight tip about the future from a Being of the Future. He took out his notebook.

"Ah, the lost art of writing!" the Being remarked curiously, getting more and more superior. Its arm, Julius noticed, was now

definitely shorter and more feeble, while the fingers had become long and tentacle-like. It was still evolving before his very eyes. The mouth was much smaller, the eyes large and luminous, both overshadowed by the enormous brain. Even as he looked at it, it refreshed itself further from the bottle of Elixir, now nearly empty. Then it surveyed him—with the air of an entomologist studying an interesting beetle. Certainly, with his spectacles and his open mouth and green felt hat, Julius looked rather like one.

"What are you?" it asked, loftily, as though the point had just struck it.

Julius was seized with a sudden panic at the sort of experimental look in the Being's eye. Profiting by the apparent feebleness of its physical frame, he made an attempt to get up and run. To find himself hobnobbing with a Creature of the Unborn Future who was getting more and more Future every minute was too much for anyone to sustain with equanimity.

He ran a few paces and then something stopped him. The Being had not moved; it had merely beckoned with a tentacle from one side of that enormous swaying brain over the fragile body, and Julius's mind felt suddenly paralysed as though a half-brick had hit it. Against his will he felt himself retracing his steps.

The Being, the mighty Brain, did not speak further, yet words seemed to arrive in Julius's consciousness.

"Take off that hat," were the words, "and give it to me!"

"No," stammered Julius; but took it off.

The next minute he found himself wearing the other's absurd pill-box hat, held by elastic under the chin. He felt he was not looking his best. There were some fashions in which even an undergraduate could hardly dress and escape criticism.

"Raise your hat to me!" came the unspoken command to his brain from the Being, the green felt hat now balanced like a toy on its massive dome.

"Won't!" said Julius. Good heavens! was this Brain, now so stupendous that he could almost hear the throbbing of its mighty machinery, trying to teach him tricks, just as a man might do to a dog—or a monkey?

Despite himself, however, he raised the little pill-box a short way off his head, whence it snapped back again under the pull of the elastic with a little pop. He noticed with still growing terror, as he did so, that the Being's nose had dwindled to nothing, while its legs were but rudimentary. Its arms, too, were mere bunches of tentacles, its body a small, emaciated, reed-like structure. The mouth, now no longer apparently used for speech, was but a tiny orifice.

"Raise it again," it thought at him.

"Won't!" said Julius, and raised it weakly, wondering if he would have to die for the King next. Again the pill-box popped back on to his head. It hurt him.

"Die for the King!" fiercely thought the Being, as though it had read his mind.

"Won't!" repeated Julius, miserably but flung himself on his back. The enormous Brain swayed forward at him, and its tentacles lowered curiously to his face. He shut his eyes in terror, but felt them touch his cheeks, warm and clammy. . . .

HE opened his eyes again with an effort and looked into bright black ones. The organ-grinder's monkey was sitting on his chest stroking his face. He looked swiftly round. There was no one in sight, except the grinning Italian. No sign of the Brain! What had happened? He quickly felt his head. No, he had his own green felt hat and the monkey was wearing the pill-box.

He sat up suddenly. . . .

"Eh—Eh—Eh—Ek!" remarked the monkey, severely, thus rudely dislodged, and sat huffily down beside him.

"Good-a mornin'!" began the Italian opening negotiations. "You like-a da music? You give-a da monk one pennee and I play-a?"

"How long have you been here?" asked Julius, ignoring the suggestion.

"'Bout five minutes. You make-a da dream and da monk he go make lof. You give-a pennee? I just bin play-a by mistake at loony man in cottage down road Get nothing," he added, with an eye to the effects of pathos.

But Julius, at mention of the old man, had turned to look for the Elixir bottle. To his unutterable horror he saw that the monkey at his side had found and uncorked it and was in the act of raising it to its lips.

With a wild yell Julius seized the bottle and flung it into the road, where its contents escaped into the dust. Good Lord! In another moment the whole thing would have begun again in reality. He leapt to his feet and, all thought of the "water-wagon" banished, started swiftly in the direction of the village inn and brandy. As he passed the astonished Italian, the monkey looked sternly at him in a queerly reminiscent manner.

"Won't!" stammered Julius, feebly, and raised his hat to it.

The Italian stared, then gave a howl and ran in the opposite direction. Two loonies in half an hour was too much for anyone!

BUNNY'S TURKEY

By MARY E. MANN

Illustrated by E. F. SHERIE

BUNNY—her baptismal names were Beatrix Ursula Noel, but they called her Bunny for short—had not by any means arrived at a point when she could dream of regretting her marriage to a man lacking, so far, the wherewithal to keep her as, hitherto, in her father's house she had been kept; but in her few weeks of wedded life she had certainly experienced many of the drawbacks of a very straitened income. That is, she and her husband had experienced them together; for what had been enough for the modest needs of a bachelor, brought up in a somewhat penurious environment, was not quite comfortably enough for a man with a very young and altogether inexperienced wife.

The approach of Christmas emphasized the fact that bills for the furnishing of their tiny home could not yet be fully paid off, and any outlay for the festive season must be beyond their present means.

"Never mind—we shall be together!" Bunny said, bravely; and Billy said what a brick his little wife was, and vowed he would rather starve with her than feast with any other woman.

For Billy also was very young.

"What are we going to do for our Christmas

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The first hitch occurred when father asked for a bit off the turkey's legs.

dinner ? " he asked, a little apprehensively, as the day drew near. " Dearest, I wish we could——"

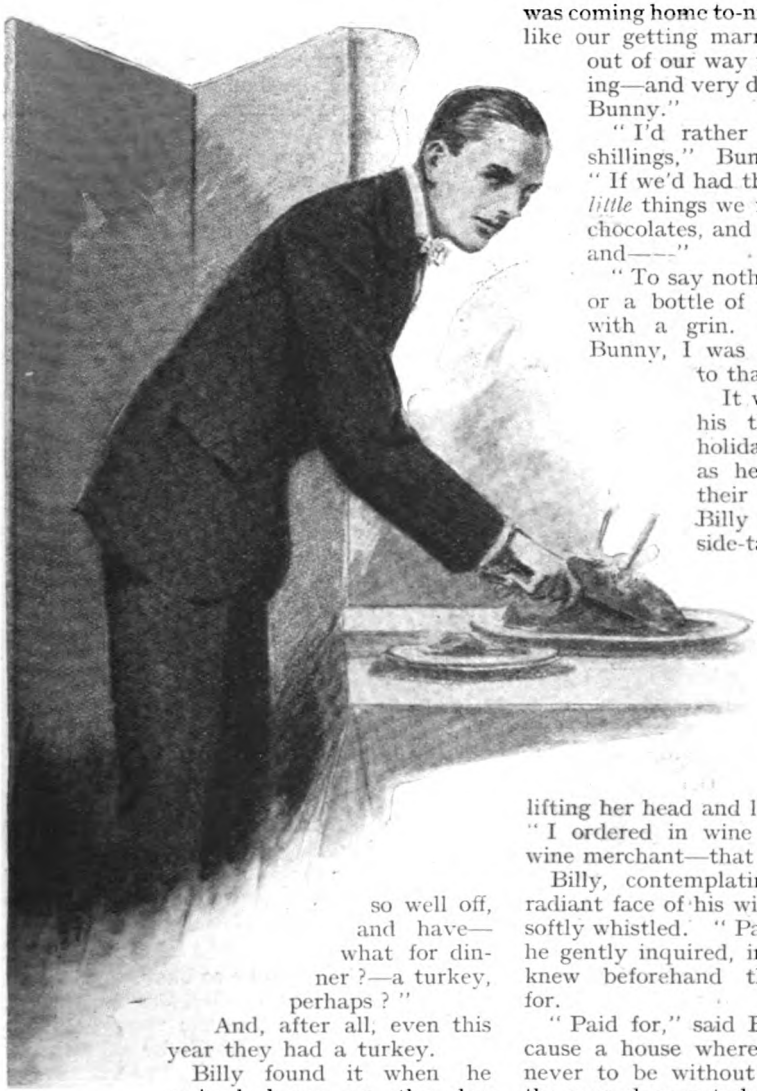
" I know, but—be a sensible boy !—we *can't*. I'll tell you what I've arranged. Oh, I have thought it all out—a leg of pork ! Part of one ! Part of a *bee*-utiful leg of pork ! "

" Pork ? But you don't like p——"

" Hush ! Never mind ! You do. Listen. A leg of pork—the bone taken out—nicely stuffed. It's a—what you call a ' cut and come again ' dish—and will last us for several days, especially as the day-girl—little selfish wretch !—says she's not coming at Christmas-time, and there'll be only just you and me to eat it."

" Well——," said Billy, and sighed a little. " Next year, perhaps——"

" Next year they'll have raised your salary, or taken you into partnership, or something. And Daddy, when he sees we have managed, and haven't been hanging on him, as he so often predicted, will allow me something. Oh, next year we'll be ever



so well off, and have—what for dinner?—a turkey, perhaps?"

And, after all, even this year they had a turkey.

Billy found it when he arrived home on the day before Christmas Eve, and was shown by a proud and excited Bunny the contents of a hamper just unpacked.

"It's from your father and mother, Billy. Look at this paper, 'To our dear son and his wife,' pinned on its breast. And—what's this? A recipe for bread-sauce and stuffing sent me by your mother. As if I should have married without knowing how to make bread-sauce and stuffing!"

"My mother is a thundering good cook," Billy said, reprovingly. "It's awfully kind of them, Bunny. They haven't got much to spare, you know, and that bird must have cost them at least thirty shillings."

"Not really? Thirty shillings!"

"Not a penny less. I asked the price of a turkey like that, just for curiosity, as I was coming home to-night. Well, they didn't like our getting married, and they've kept out of our way; this is a peace offering—and very decent of them, I think, Bunny."

"I'd rather have had the thirty shillings," Bunny reflectively said. "If we'd had that, what a lot of nice *little* things we might have got, Billy: chocolates, and almonds, and raisins; and——"

"To say nothing of a bottle of port, or a bottle of whisky," Billy added, with a grin. "And, do you know, Bunny, I was quite looking forward to that leg of pork!"

It was on the next night, his three days' Christmas holiday having begun, that, as he sat with his wife at their very modest repast, Billy noticed on the little side-table the unusual and welcome appearance of a couple of bottles.

"Hullo!" he said. "Hullo! What's this? My people haven't been sending more Christmas presents, Bunny?"

"No," said Bunny, lifting her head and looking very important. "I ordered in wine and whisky from our wine merchant—that is to say, our grocer."

Billy, contemplating the very juvenile, radiant face of his wife, closed one eye and softly whistled. "Paid for them, I hope?" he gently inquired, in the tone of one who knew beforehand they were not paid for.

"Paid for," said Bunny. "Whisky, because a house where there's a man ought never to be without whisky, even though the man does not drink it. Burgundy, for you to have a glass at dinner to-morrow night——"

"With the turkey," he finished. "Very nice! Very nice and thoughtful of you, my most precious; but——"

"Not exactly with the turkey," Bunny corrected, glanced at him a little doubtfully, and looked away. "The fact is I *sold* the turkey, Billy."

He opened his eyes upon her. "Sold it? Sold the turkey my dear old father and mother sent! *Sold* it!"

"You said you had been longing for the leg of pork. You remember you said it, don't you, Billy? And I wanted you to have something to make you feel festive on Christmas Day—and——"

"But the turkey my father and mother

sent! *Sold* it! What on earth will they say?"

"Darling, they'll never know. I wrote your mother the most dutiful, beautiful letter, saying how delighted we were with the turkey, and how we had neither of us ever seen such a beauty, and how I had already made the stuffing (by her recipe) and was going to-morrow to make the bread-sauce as she had so kindly instructed me, and how we were both looking forward to enjoying the turkey on Christmas Day. Oh, it was a charming letter!"

"Well—well! It's done, so it can't be undone, I suppose. But how did you sell it, and what did you get for it?"

"I made the butcher take it. He had to sell it again, of course, so I didn't get *quite* the thirty shillings. You aren't vexed with me, Billy?"

"No, no, of course not. So long as my mother never hears of it, I suppose it's all right."

"And you love me for having bought you the whisky and the Burgundy? I might have bought myself silk stockings and gloves, instead——"

"Of course, I love you for it."

"Then, because you are a good boy I am coming round to kiss you, and to give you a glass of Burgundy, this instant minute. And you shall have a sip of the whisky—just a little, *little* sip—before you go to bed to-night."

On the afternoon of the next day Billy announced that he thought he would bicycle over to see his father and mother—a couple, retired from business now, who lived in the country at a few miles distance.

"You won't miss me, own love?"

"Why are you looking so glum?"

"No—no! I shall be so busy. And you'll tell them both how we shall *love* the turkey, and how I am making the most delicious bread-sauce for it? You'll be sure to tell them?"

"All right. But aren't you a wicked little fibber?"

"Well, once in a while—and in a good cause! But if it will ease your conscience, you old stickler, I'll make some bread-sauce now—so there!"

He laughed and pinched her round cheeks, and went, carrying the picture of her happy, smiling face with him on his way.

A COUPLE of hours later, on his return, an altogether different Bunny met him.

She came out of their sitting-room, carefully closing the door behind her, into the hall as she heard his step.

"They weren't at home," he greeted her. "I don't know what's become of them. Hullo! What's happened? What on earth's the matter now?" For her small round

face was crimson with excitement and evident distress, the eyes lifted to his were wide, frightened, appealing.

"They're here! Both of them! Your father and mother are here!"

"Here?" He looked about him bewildered. "Where?" She held out a hand, which instantly dropped limply to her side, towards the sitting-room. "My father and mother? Well, my precious, all right, all right!"

"They've come—they've come to—*dinner.*"

For a moment, not comprehending her distress, he stared. "It's Christmas-time, and they want to make friends," he said. Then, as light broke upon him, "Gracious heavens—the turkey!" he breathed.

"Yes: the turkey." And dragging out her scrap of handkerchief she held it to her eyes and began sobbingly to cry, "What shall I do? What shall I do? Oh, what, what, *what* shall I do?"

He gazed blankly at her. "Well, I *am* blest!" he said at last. "If only I hadn't told that—that *big one* this afternoon!"

She dropped the moist dab of handkerchief to stare at him through tear-brimmed eyes. "But you didn't tell them? They were out?"

"I went in and wrote it all—you made such a point of it—and left it on the table."

"It's all my fault. All! All! They'll hate me; and so will you—so will you!"

"Oh, all about that! Nonsense! Nonsense! We're in a mess, but look here, Bunny, it isn't a tragedy. I'll put it all right." He paused a moment to think. "D——n, d——n, *d——n* the turkey!" he said under his breath and made off to the door.

She stopped him. "What are you going to do?"

"Going to put it right. Going to own up, of course. What else is there to do?" Desperately he pulled the door open, but she closed it again, and stood with her back against it, and held him.

"Listen!" she said. "You can't do that. You know what they are—so old-fashioned, so—so puritanical. They'd think I'd ruined your morals, dragged you into a sink of iniquity. And so I have—I have! You mustn't own up, Billy. You mustn't say anything. Just keep a close mouth; I'll contrive something—I'll manage."

"All very well—but how? *How?*"

She dragged him across the little kitchen to the oven, displaying the odorous, browning joint within. "Doesn't it look a little—just a *leetle* bit like a turkey, Billy?"

He was silent, gazing at the crackled joint. Then he reluctantly shook his head. "My mother is fairly sharp. She wouldn't be taken in for a moment," he said.

Bunny, stooping to baste the joint, was crying into the gravy. "I wish she'd never been born!" she sobbed.

"Wish who'd never been born? The turkey?"

"No. Your mother. I wish you'd been a miracle, or something. Don't stand there looking so helpless. Go along now. They heard you come in. Don't say a word—not one about this. Leave it to me. I'll manage. Tell them I'm busy in the kitchen. Tell them I'm stirring—stirring the bread-sauce. Tell them I'm basting—basting the turkey. Go."

And he went.

BILLY'S mother was a kind and good-natured woman, but being a mother-in-law, and being human, was bound to be critical of her daughter-in-law. Both she and his father had been opposed to his early and, as they considered, reckless marriage. "A little useless, know-nothing bit of a thing! And a girl you can't possibly keep as she has been kept. You're asking for trouble, that's what you're doing, Billy. Asking for sorrow; and you'll drink it by spoonfuls."

It was in such terms they had criticized his choice and apostrophized their son. Billy had turned a deaf ear and gone his own way, taking the risk, if risk it was, with the joyful confidence, sometimes so happily justified, of the young and courageous lover. But having prepared a very modest home for her, and taken his wife to himself, he had kept away from the home of his disapproving parents until—until the present of the turkey!

But for the embarrassment caused by the advent of that unpropitious bird he would have been delighted to resume at last friendly relations with his parents. He was proud of his little home, proud, above and through all, of the charming little wife who adorned it.

They would see how right he had been, and how wrong they—he was very fond of them, but he wanted them to see that!

And they were generous in their praise. "Everything looks very nice, dear," the mother said. "And you, my dear boy, you look very nice, too."

"I'm all right, mother. Never was better."

"And—Bunny (I wish you would not call her Bunny, dear. Sounds so like a rabbit)—she seems well and happy."

"A very pretty little woman," the father chimed in. "There's no one can deny you've got a pretty little woman for a wife, William."

"I only wish, dear—I can't help wishing, now she's married, she'd let her hair grow." (Bunny was bobbed.)

"She won't," said Billy, shortly. He

turned his face from his mother, in token she had transgressed, and talked business talk with his father, telling him Bunny had every hope of her father coming round——

" Sit down. Where are you going, mother ?" he broke off to say.

" Dear, I thought I'd just pop into the kitchen to see if I can give Bunny a helping hand. She tells me you have not a servant at present."

" Bunny's all right, mother. Bunny can manage. Sit down."

Mother obeyed. " I know a turkey is a difficult thing to cook," she said. " Especially a big bird like that. *You* saw the turkey, my dear ?."

" Turned the scale at eighteen pounds," said father. " Mother and I thought we'd best come and help you to get through it."

When Bunny, her face crimson from tears, excitement, and the fire, came in to lay the cloth for dinner, mother would not be restrained from helping her.

Little difficulties arose. " Don't lay for father and me on the same side," mother expostulated. " Him and me aren't so silly we can't be separated at table." Bunny, who had an object in the plan, persisted. " *Your* way, of course, in your own house, not mine," the elder lady allowed. " But the table doesn't look so ship-shape as if I'd been on one side and father on the other. And where are your carvers, my dear ? "

" Here," said Bunny, indicating the small serving-table.

" What ! You aren't going to carve your turkey on the table, then ? "

" No," said Bunny with a superior air. " That is not done now, you know. We always have our carving done at the side-table."

" Well, I've heard it's the fashion, but, for my part, I always like to see what I'm eating."

" You see that when it's on your plate," said Bunny.

She proudly surveyed the table, resplendent with her wedding presents of " old " glass and silver. Ah, if only Billy and she could sit to eat their Christmas dinner without the intrusion of the unwanted in-laws, and the advent of the obtrusive turkey !

Before the meal began she called her husband out into the hall. " Billy," she said, " you've got to be very lively and amusing to-night—more amusing even than usual."

" Have I ? Why ? "

" To divert attention from—you know what. So that they forget to notice."

" How does it look ? " in an anxious whisper.

" Well—if anyone got close and *examined* it—— But you're going to carve it on the side-table ; and every time they seem like looking round you must rattle away with lively remarks——"

" Good Heaven ! " said Billy.

THE soup with which the meal was begun was left by father untouched upon his plate.

" Father is never one for soup ; you must excuse him, dear," said mother, apologetically, to Bunny.

" Keeping myself for the turkey," father facetiously explained. Neither father nor mother was characterized by the refinement which distinguished their son, Bunny knew. But then Billy was wonderful—who was like Billy ?

That gentleman was lingering over his soup, and was even so ungenteel as to ask for a second helping, in the anxious desire to postpone the moment when the turkey must appear. Lingeringly he helped his wife to remove the soup-plates, and followed her into the kitchen.

" Now for it ! " he said. His face wore an agonized expression as he gazed at Bunny hastily decorating the dish with fried sausages and concealing the joint, as far as possible, beneath liberal adornments of parsley.

Bunny was quite satisfied with the effect. " A slice of that on a plate swimming with gravy and covered with bread-sauce, and who can tell the difference ? " she asked.

" And what are these things sticking out at the sides, in frills ? "

" Skewers, you silly boy. To look like legs, at a little distance. It is *perfectly* all right, dear. Now carry it to the side-table. Don't look so frightened, Billy ; and be sure to stand before it while you carve."

All went well. The ladies' plates were placed before them, Bunny engaging mother's attention with a ludicrous story she was telling about the absent day-girl. The first hitch occurred when father asked for a bit off the turkey's legs. " Don't cut the breast for me, my boy. A cut off the thigh, for choice."

" Father don't care for the white meat of a fowl, you remember, my dear," the mother explained to the son.

For the moment Billy was nonplussed. He turned a beseeching glance from the skewers decorated with pink and white frills to his wife.

" Go on, dear," she admonished him sharply. " Don't you hear what father says ? Cut him a nice piece of the leg."

And Billy, hacking away in desperation, hewed off a lump of the under part of the pork.

" I made the bread-sauce and stuffing by

your recipe," the arch-deceiver said to her mother-in-law. " I do hope it is nice ! "

Billy, flustered and uncomfortable, sat down to his plate. " Pork," he said to himself with the first mouthful. " Unmistakable, undeniable *pork !* "

" I don't doubt 'tis the fashionable way, but I must say it don't seem like Christmas not to see the turkey on the table," father ventured.

And mother, dropping her dinner napkin, and turning to get a surreptitious view of the bird as she picked it up, reproved him for the sentiment. " We're old-fashioned folk, my dear," she chided. " Bunny is quite right to begin in the modern way. Not any more, I thank you, my dear," she replied to her son's half-hearted invitation. " It's a rich food, turkey—and it doesn't do to take too much of it." And father, entreated by Bunny to take a second helping, rather determinedly refused.

But brimming bumpers of the Burgundy filled the " antique " glasses, and mother, vowing that wine always got into her head, yet permitted her glass to be filled again. By the time the host rose to carry the dish from the room—a load in his hands and a load taken off his heart—the party was a merry one.

The plum-pudding, stuck with blanched almonds and brave with branches of holly, was placed before Bunny to carve—no reason why that triumph of culinary art should be hidden on a side-table ! They poured a wine-glass of the whisky on the dish, and set it ablaze. After which came, of course, oranges and figs and nuts, and all went merry as a marriage bell.

" And I tell you what, William," father said when the evening drew towards the close, " you've not only got a pretty little wife, but you've got a rattling good cook, my boy ; and if you had a bit of mistletoe handy I'd give your Bunny a kiss."

" And so you shall, without the mistletoe," Bunny cried, and went, eyes shining, to sit on the arm of his chair, and to hold up her pretty young face to his. It had all gone off splendidly, and she was triumphant.

But Billy would have had an easier mind if he had not chanced to see his mother put on her glasses to take a closer look at the contents of her plate; if he had not been aware that his father, who had risen under pretence of opening the door, had peered closely at the remains of the " turkey " as it was borne from the room.

When all was over, and the motor, hired from their village, was waiting to take the pair home again, the young couple warmly expressed the pleasure it had given them to have them to their Christmas dinner ; and Bunny, rendered bold by success, cried, " And thank you again and again for the *bee-utiful* turkey."

" Mother was always a good judge of a bird," said father, proudly, " and she certainly did herself credit this time. I wonder if you'll think me imposing if I ask you to let me carry away a drumstick ? "

" A drumstick ? " repeated Billy, aghast.

" A drumstick ? " echoed Bunny, paling.

" Father shouldn't have asked," mother said. " But he does so love a turkey drumstick, devilled, for his breakfast. Do excuse him, Bunny."

Then Bunny, before whose mind's eye had floated a vision of skewers trimmed with pink and white frills, pulled herself together. With hardly a moment's pause she said : " I am so dreadfully sorry ! If I only had known I would have saved you *both* the drumsticks, but you see, dear Billy's father, the turkey was *boned.*"

" I LOVE your parents, Billy," Bunny said as the pair were driven away. " I didn't think I should, but I do. They're so simple and so—well, so gullible, dear things ! And wasn't the pork with the turkey-stuffing and the bread-sauce quite delicious ?"

" Quite," said Billy, slow and meditative, staring in front of him.

" Then why do you speak in that melancholy way ? Why are you looking so glum ? " She was seated on the arm of his chair, and she pulled his face round to hers by the simple expedient of digging her fingers into his cheek and tugging at it. " You were very good, and I was very good, and the ' turkey ' was very good. And didn't you and I act beautifully ? "

" Beautifully ! " he said ; his tone was dejected rather than enthusiastic. " And I think my father and mother *acted very well too !* "

TWO days later our young couple received a note from Billy's mother which ran :—

" I want you, my dear children, to come to dinner with us to-morrow. We are old-fashioned people, dine in the middle of the day, the turkey (Bunny will excuse it) *on the table.* I was fortunate enough to secure a beauty at a reduced price at our butcher's —*yours* as well as *ours*—who had taken it, he told me, to *oblige a customer.* Dinner at two sharp. Be sure to come."

MY LETTERS *from* GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

MISS MURIEL BARNBY

talks of her early memories of Gilbert and Sullivan, and of the letters they wrote to her and other members of her family. These letters are now published for the first time.

A SPECIAL INTERVIEW BY
CLAUDE F. LUKE

WITH each recurring season of the D'Oyly Carte operas in London, it is brought home with increasing force how swift are the passing years, and how remote the London that was first delighted with the exquisite fruits of the Gilbert and Sullivan combination. It is difficult for those who saw the first performance of, say, " The Mikado " to realize that this event took place over forty years ago, or to believe that it is nearly fifty years since the " Pirates " first plundered the hearts of a delighted world.

But the numbers now with us who remember such incidents are few; even more depleted are the ranks of those who counted either Gilbert or Sullivan among their intimate acquaintances. They are, in years at least, elderly folk, and form, unhappily, a fast-diminishing band. One, however, who is by no means elderly, and yet knew a delightful intimacy with both the composer and the librettist, is Miss Muriel Barnby. Her father, Sir Joseph Barnby, both as composer and conductor, achieved as much as anyone in carrying British music to the high place it attained in the last decade, and from the time when, as young students at the Royal Academy of Music, he and Sullivan shared first place in the first Mendelssohn Scholarship the two remained firm friends. Sullivan was a frequent visitor to the Barnby home, and it was in this way that he and Miss Muriel attained that degree of familiarity which resulted in her invariably referring to him as " Uncle Arthur."

W. S. Gilbert was on equally friendly terms with the family, and especially with the little girl, who never hesitated to consult him on problems of dress, drama, and similar subjects of mutual interest. Miss Barnby now lives in a quaint little house in that quiet London backwater, Smith Square, Westminster. Her house is easily recognizable by the petunia door with the brass knocker fashioned in the shape of the gateway of the Eton Cloisters (it was at Eton—where her father was Precentor—that Miss Barnby was born and spent her early years).

Recently I had occasion to call upon Miss Barnby; it was an interesting experience. The tiny drawing-room, where we sat and talked, is imbued with the spirit of the days that were part of her child hood. An occasional modern note is struck, as, for example, by the quaint rag dolls that recline in roguish attitudes on the settee, but for the most part the room owes its charm to its many visible links with the past. The blue china bowl given by Charles Kingsley to Sir Joseph, the " Spy " cartoons framed upon the walls, the many signed photographs of famous musicians, actors, and dramatists of the last generation, all combine to create an atmosphere redolent of London of the 'nineties.

In such surrounding it was inevitable that our conversation should turn to the famous figures that stared at us from the walls. For a time we talked of Gilbert and Sullivan, of the perennial popularity of their operas, and of our individual favourites,

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whereupon Miss Barnby produced from a drawer in a bureau a packet of letters bearing Victorian stamps and a calligraphy of a standard seldom attained in these hurried days. The letters were from Gilbert and Sullivan to members of the Barnby family, and had lain for a long time forgotten until a recent "spring clean" had rediscovered them. With the particular smile that we reserve for cherished memories, Miss Barnby now perused the faded letters, embellishing each with an account of the circumstances that caused it to be written.

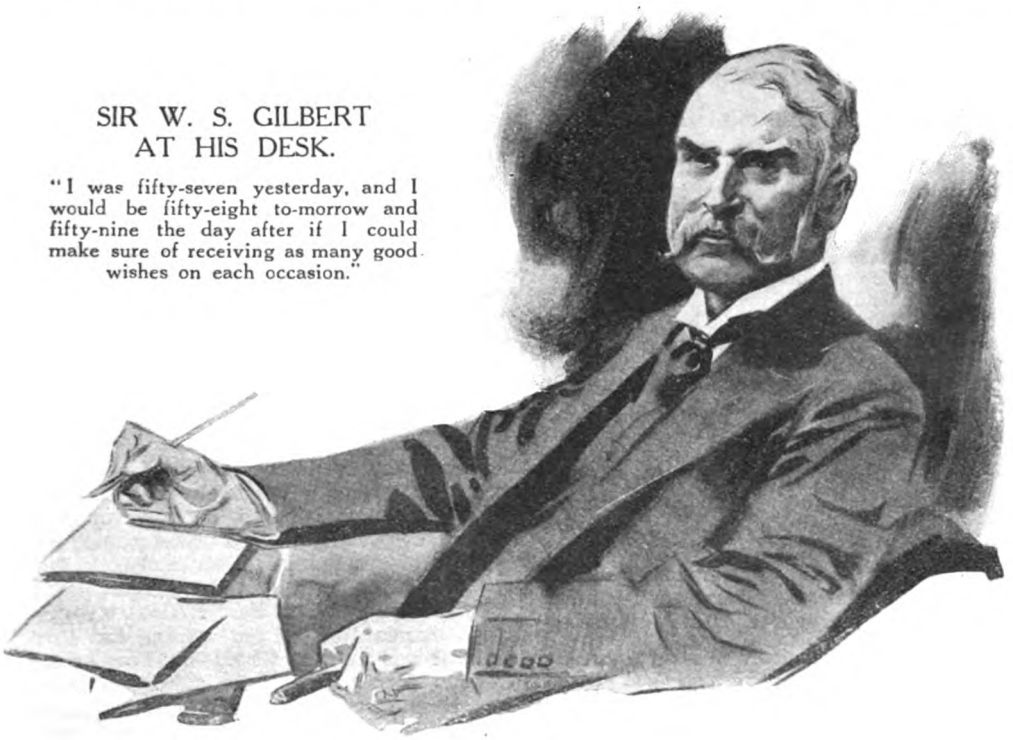
"As a child I made it a firm rule to write both to Uncle Arthur and to Mr. Gilbert on their respective birthdays, and was always seriously admonished by one or the other if I happened to allow a birthday to pass without doing so. With Mr. Gilbert his age was always a source of humorous interest to himself, as these letters will show. In 1889, at a time when he was busy at work with the libretto of 'The Gondoliers,' he wrote to me thus :—

"'I dare say you think I forgot to write and thank you for the very pretty letter you sent me on my birthday. But, if you think this, you are quite wrong, for every morning I have said : "I must be sure to write to Muriel to-day," and every night I have gone to bed without having had time to do it. So you see I didn't forget, I procrastinated. You see, I have been so very busy at the Savoy Theatre, rehearsing the new piece, and so very busy every evening making alterations and composing new verbal fireworks to dazzle Great Britain and Ireland with, that I have had no time to do anything else. However, this is Saturday, and on Saturday I have a holiday, so I can sit down and write to Miss Barnby, bringing to this agreeable duty all the concentration of thought that so important a matter demands.

"'Thank you for writing to me on my fifty-third birthday. When you are fifty-three I will write to you. I shall be quite a middle-aged man then, about ninety-six, I think; it seems so odd to think of *me* middle-aged !'

"His genuine delight in the company and friendship of small children is never more clearly demonstrated than in these letters. On the occasion of his fifty-seventh birthday he sent me this typically Gilbertian note :—

"'I begin to think I am a very undeserving young man, and that you are a very forgiving young lady. I am really shocked—really and unaffectedly shocked—to find that I left your charming letter unanswered. I can't think how it came to pass, because I have a distinct recollection of sitting down to write to you and of endeavouring to collect my thoughts so as to make the letter worthy of the occasion—but at that point my memory stops. Whether I wrote the letter—and whether (if I did) it was as brilliant a production as I had determined it



SIR W. S. GILBERT AT HIS DESK.

"I was fifty-seven yesterday, and I would be fifty-eight to-morrow and fifty-nine the day after if I could make sure of receiving as many good wishes on each occasion."

should be—or whether, after I wrote it, I posted it—or whether it found its way into the heap of papers that litter an untidy man's writing-table, I really can't say. I dare say it will turn up when I "tidy up" the year after next.

"'I get so many nice letters on my birthday from charming young ladies that I am quite reconciled to becoming an elderly gentleman—I was fifty-seven yesterday, and I would be fifty-eight to-morrow and fifty-nine the day after if I could make sure of receiving as many good wishes on each occasion.'

"And a month later his recent birthday is still a source of amusement to him, for in reply to a letter I sent him, scolding him for his tardiness in answering a previous one, he writes :—

"'Only a very surly and ill-conditioned gentleman would find it troublesome to receive pleasant letters from charming young ladies. If I don't answer the letters which I receive from you for two or three days it is because I have a dreadful habit of putting off until to-morrow the work I ought to do to-day. For instance, I ought, properly speaking, to have been fifty-seven last birthday. Well, when I was about seventeen I grew so lazy and procrastinating that I put off being eighteen until it was altogether too late, so I said, "Never mind, I'll wait another year and be eighteen then," but I again forgot to be eighteen, and so on year after year until the present time. Thus it comes to pass that, instead of being a grave and reverend signor of fifty-seven, I am merely a grey-headed old tomboy of seventeen, who really means to be eighteen next birthday. I do hope that this will be a lesson to you and that you will never on any consideration,' etc., etc.

"But in 1895, on the occasion of his fifty-ninth birthday, his age seems to have developed into a sore point rather than an amusing incident, as he writes :—

"'My dear Muriel,—

"'(If you are not too big a young lady to be so addressed by a young gentleman.)

"'Many thanks for kindly remembering my birthday. Personally I should like to forget it. But everyone always seems so glad when I'm a year older that there's no chance of that. I suppose the general joy will culminate when I die.'

"A month after this I sent him my photograph and begged that he would give me one of himself. To my delight he sent me the one you see on the wall with the inscription 'From W. S. Gilbert. Poor old chap!' But in the accompanying letter he has regained his customary good-humour and writes this exquisitely funny epistle :—

"'Thank you very much for the charming photograph. I dare say you will be angry and indignant when I tell you that I have not yet had the two volumes of plays bound for you, but I only received them a week ago (for I had to wait until some more were printed) and I have been so busy of late that I have hardly had time to deal with them. However, I will send them off at once, and as soon as the bookbinders have recovered from the mental stupor that seems to affect all work people for about ten days after Christmas, I dare say they will be good enough to set to work upon them.

"'As to the photograph—well, I send you the only one I possess—but it looks so much older than yours that I am ashamed to submit it for your approval. Of course I don't mean that the photograph looks older, but the individual represented in it. There was a time when I used to express myself distinctly, but I am rapidly relapsing into a condition of babbling dotage. I am a crumbling ruin—a magnificent ruin, no doubt, but still a ruin—and, like all ruins, I look best by moonlight. Give me a sprig of ivy and an owl under my arm, and Tintern Abbey would not be "in it" with me.'

"There is a curious fact about this letter that I only recently discovered. In his play 'Foggerty's Fairy,' written over a dozen years before this letter, Gilbert makes Malvona say: 'I am generally known as the Splendid Ruin,' to which Foggerty replies: 'You *are* a splendid ruin. With a sprig or two of ivy and an owl under your arm you would be complete.' It is obvious that this passage must have pleased the author intensely for him to repeat it in a letter written many years afterwards.

"Just previous to this letter I had written Gilbert, giving him all the worldly advice of my early teens concerning his future work. Precocity was undoubtedly a prominent characteristic of mine in those days, for, after seeing a performance of 'Parsifal,' I sent him a letter seriously advising him to attempt a work on similar lines. His reply reads :—

"'Now that you have put the idea into my head I think I should like to compose just such another work as "Parsifal," because it would so astonish my friends. It would be the very last thing they would expect of me. How they would abuse it!

"'It is a most unfortunate thing, but the King of Spain is *the* European potentate with whom I am not on intimate terms. Isn't that unlucky?'

"His reference to the King of Spain was in answer to a request of mine for any photograph or autograph he might possess of that monarch. At that time I was a passionate admirer of the Spanish King, and collected all newspaper cuttings, photographs, and relics relating to him that I could lay my small hands upon; the reason for this interest was the fact that I had heard that he was born a king—not merely an heir to a throne—and my childish conception of the incident was that he had entered this

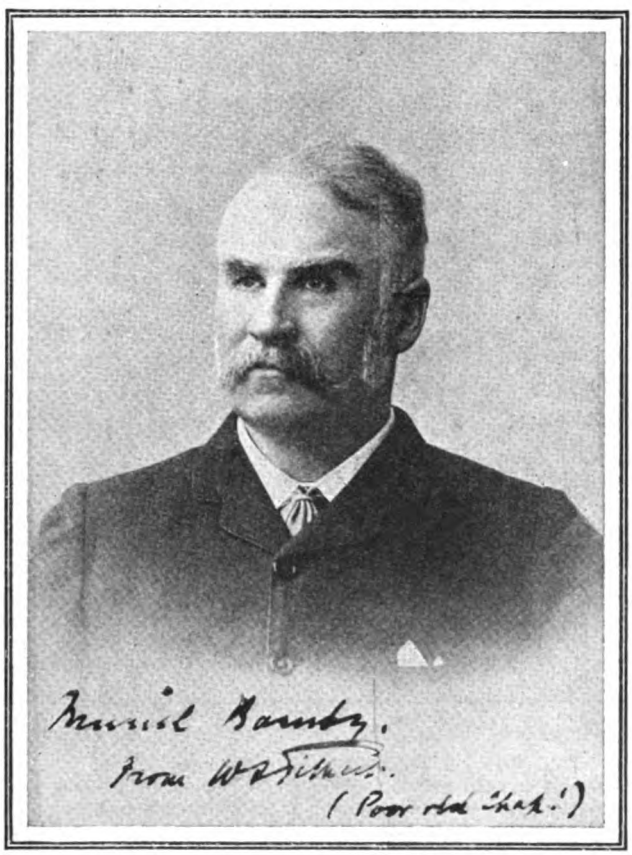
life complete with a golden crown upon his baby head!

"I tremble to ponder upon the burden that now rests upon the soul of Mr. Ricketts for re-dressing 'The Mikado' as he has done this season. For Gilbert, as you know, was a martinet concerning the costumes of his players, and would not permit a single bow or buckle to be altered. These two letters show this trait in a remarkable fashion. The first is a friendly note to my father, who was producing 'Princess Ida' (I *think* that was the piece) by pupils of the Guildhall School of Music. Although it was only an amateur production, Gilbert was vastly concerned that it should be properly 'dressed.' He writes:—

"'I forgot to say that the three robes worn by the three gentlemen should be so devised as to cover and conceal their legs when they move, or they will provoke unseemly and ribald laughter. The dress worn by the ladies consists of an underdress with a robe (open in front) over it. The dress worn by the men should *look like this* when it is on; but should, in point of fact, be in one piece, the inner garment being in the nature of a flap which can readily be buttoned across the body, without delay, and then present the desired appearance.

"'The armour worn by the three brothers should not be in more pieces than is necessary. The arm-pieces and gauntlets should be *in one*. So likewise the leg and foot pieces, that they may come off with one movement.'

"But the other epistle is even more revealing. When I was fourteen years of age I was invited to the Lord Mayor's Fancy Dress Ball for Children, and was considerably exercised in my mind as to what dress I should wear. As a tentative decision I chose to appear as Juliet, and wrote to Gilbert asking his advice as to the correct costume. Note the meticulous care with which he describes and even draws his conception of the frock I should wear. Here is his letter:—

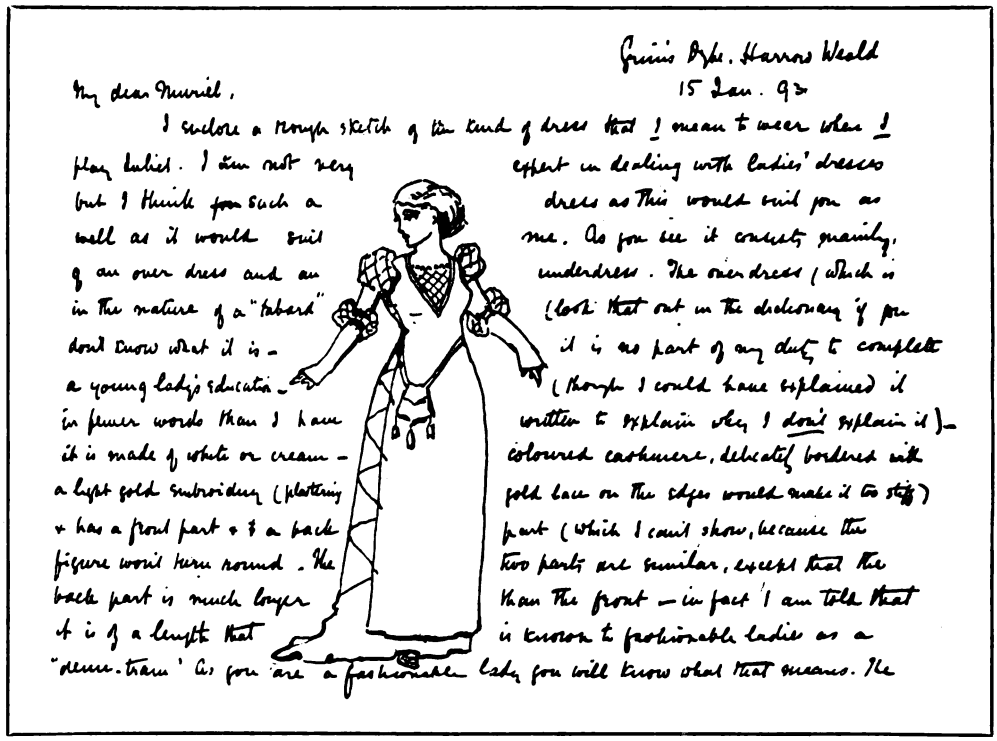


When sending this portrait to Miss Barnby, Sir W. S. Gilbert wrote: "I am a crumbling ruin—and, like all ruins, I look best by moonlight."

"'I enclose a rough sketch of the kind of dress that *I* mean to wear when *I* play Juliet. I am not very expert in dealing with ladies' dresses, but I think such a dress as this would suit you as well as it would suit me.

"'As you see, it consists mainly of an overdress and an underdress. The overdress—which is in the nature of a tabard (look that out in the dictionary if you don't know what it is—it is no part of my duty to complete a young lady's education, though I could have explained it in fewer words than I have written to explain why I *don't* explain it)—it is made of white or cream-coloured cashmere, delicately bordered with a light gold embroidery (plastering gold lace on the edges would make it too stiff), and has a front part and a back part (which I can't show, because the figure won't turn round). The two parts are similar, except that the back part is much longer than the front—in fact, I am told that it is of a length that is known to fashionable ladies as a demi-train! As you are a fashionable lady you will know what that means. The front and back of the tabard are loosely laced together with a gold cord from under the arms right away down to the lower edge of the front. The tabard has no sleeves, but the front and back should be laced together on the shoulders.

The arms have very large Indian muslin puffs at the shoulders and at the elbows, and between them are sleeves (in two pieces) of stiff gold brocade, the upper and lower parts of the sleeves being kept together—that is, the upper sleeve being connected with the lower sleeve by thin gold cords, criss-crossed over the puffs. The tabard *may* be of very soft silk, figured, and the underdress may also be of figured silk, but in



A reduced facsimile of part of the letter here quoted.

that case the tabard should be white, or of some very light colour, with a delicate Venetian pattern on it, and the lower dress should be of some solid colour such as a rich red—but also figured with a much bolder pattern.

"'The triangular thing in front is, I believe, called a stomacher (you will forgive me if I am wrong). That is made of some delicate white material, kept in its place by means of gold cords criss-crossed, and pulled slightly through the diamonds formed by the criss-crossing.

"'As even Juliet had sometimes to use a pocket-handkerchief, she should be provided with a delicately pretty satchel hanging from a band as shown in the sketch. In her hair she should wear strings of pearls, but no definite head-dress, because that would be very much in her way in her Charnel-house scene. Her shoes should be gold and white and may also be criss-crossed. The lower sleeves should come well over the knuckles—that is to say, the knuckles should be covered, but not the palm of the hand. The underdress should have a demi-train like the tabard—the two being of about the same length. There, I think I have told you all I can think of about Juliet's dress. I have nothing to add except that you must look extraordinarily beautiful or you won't justify all that Romeo says about you.

"'You will find an excellent example of the dress in a photograph from a picture called "Le Poete Florentin," in which a gentleman of the fifteenth century is conceitedly reciting one of his own poems to a group of bored friends—one of whom is a young lady in the dress described.'"

(The concluding portion of this article, containing the letters from Sir Arthur Sullivan, will appear next month.)

THE LUCK OF THE RAJAH

By

A. A. IRVINE

Illustrated by F. MATANIA, R.I.

THE soothsayer left off chanting, and sprinkled a pinch of powdered iris-root over the red-hot charcoal in the copper bowl. Roshanara, the dancing-girl, and Tota, her fat old escort, squatting on the mud floor of the hut, watched him silently. What manner of fortune would their journey bring them?

The air was heavy with the fumes of incense and the reek from the small earthenware lamp, its wick guttering in rancid coco-nut oil. Outside the hut the atmosphere was almost equally stifling. Not even a breeze was rustling the deodars. All day long from the sweltering heat of the distant plains thick clouds had been drifting over the hill-tops, heralding the approach of the rainy season. The deep brilliance of the night-sky had been blotted out. On the lip of the horizon the lightning, like a restless spirit, flickered ceaselessly.

Through the smoke-wreaths the soothsayer peered dimly at the two women. Then he shuffled his cowrie-shells into a fresh design, and began to speak.

"A good road—a lucky road," he mumbled. "For a space, honour and ease and wealth. There comes a black shadow——"

Roshanara leaned forward with a little gasp of dismay, but it was the elder woman who put the question anxiously.

"A shadow, sayest thou?"

"So it is written. A black shadow. Who knows whether of man or beast? The gods will decide."

From across the valley, breaking the silence of the night like the mirthless laugh of a lost soul, came the cry of a hyena. The women's eyes darkened with fear. They knew well enough what it was—but at such a time——? To Eastern minds the hyena has been ever a harbinger of disaster.

The soothsayer was not slow to seize his opportunity.

"There be powerful charms——" he hinted.

But Tota was already fumbling in her wallet. She rose and pressed some coins into the eager palm. Then, bestowing in her ample skirts the two cheap glass amulets he gave her, she stepped out, followed by her youthful companion, on to the narrow hill-path that led upwards to the village.

ROSHANARA, the dancing-girl from the North, lolled on the pillared balcony jutting out above the turmoil of the Lal Bazar. With an amused smile she surveyed the motley throng that came and went below her up and down the dusty street.

Hers was a face to capture a man's love and a woman's enmity. A perfect oval, pale with the clear creamy pallor of a magnolia-flower. Dark eyes, alight with mischief, looked boldly out from beneath long silken lashes dyed darker yet with *kohl*. A ring of beaten gold piercing the delicate nostrils dangled almost to the crimson bow of the soft, sensual mouth. On the finger-nails of her slim hands there shone the rosy burnish of henna; and the soles of her slender feet were red with lac.

For costume she wore a sleeveless waistcoat of bright-coloured brocade over a shirt of pale-blue silk. Her canary-coloured skirt reached to where the rows of tiny bells jingled on silver anklets. And over all a spangled muslin *sari* draped like a shawl, veiling the dusky masses of her hair, save

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for the twin curls trained forward under the shell-like ears on to either cheek.

Despite her sixteen years, she had already seen much more of the world than most Indian women of her time. The day of the British *Raj* was not yet come: railways and the telegraph were inventions still unknown even in England. The rich travelled on horseback, or by palanquin. The poor on foot, or by the slow-moving bullock-cart. So it had been a lengthy journey from the Punjab hills to Ranapore, the capital of the Chief of a Rajput State.

Not that Roshanara had found the pilgrimage irksome! On every side there had been fresh marvels; new towns to see, men young and old to fall in love with her dancing. It was Tota who had grumbled bitterly at the ills of travel. Tota was old and fat, and fond of her comforts.

Yet it was Tota herself who had been responsible for the journey. Roshanara's mother had died in giving her birth: her father, like most of her class, she had never known. Tota, long since retired from the profession of a dancer, had constituted herself the girl's guardian; and under her skilful tutelage Roshanara had proved an apt pupil. Tota's imagination had been fired by the gossip of the *bazars*. Far away to the south, it was said, there ruled a Rajah, generous and fabulously wealthy. His throne was carved from a single emerald. He rode in a golden carriage drawn by six elephants. For a few hours' amusement he had squandered a lac of rupees on a mock marriage between a mouse and a doll. Tota had pondered these sayings. Roshanara's beauty was increasing daily. She knew the steps of all the dances. With a voice like a silver flute she could sing the indecorous love-songs of the North. Surely the way to fortune was assured!

AND so it came to pass that, after many wanderings, Tota and her ward had found lodging in the lofty ramshackle house in the Lal Bazar.

As it drew near to sunset the crowd beneath the balcony thickened. Venders of *sharbat* and pedlars shrieked their wares to the passers-by, and conjurers and soothsayers their accomplishments. A string of camels, their saddlebags crammed with merchandise and black-eyed babies, padded noiselessly through the mob jostling around them. In rear of them, mounted on a huge black horse, rode a man dressed in the dark-blue uniform of the Rajah's soldiery. From her balcony Roshanara pelted all and sundry impartially with nut-shells.

One of them struck the black horse on the nose, and he plunged violently. With an exclamation of anger his rider reined him in and scowled upwards. Then, with a flash of white teeth, he broke into laughter. Like all Rajputs, Ajit Singh was a sportsman and a gentleman. Moreover, he flattered himself that he was somewhat of a poet as well.

"Aho! Instead of an imp of Shaitan, a fairy!" he cried, gallantly.

Roshanara nodded her approval. Her easy affections warmed to this strong young rider, who was staring up at her with a smile on his bold, clean-cut face. A typical Rajput horseman, with his big turban, long velvet tunic embroidered with the sun-emblem, and baggy trousers thrust into high leather boots. He was very much of a man, she thought.

"It was not meant for thee: pardon thy slave!" she made apology. And then, softly: "Thy name?"

"Ajit Singh, of the Rajah's Bodyguard. And thine?"

"Thou hast called me—fairy!"

"I was blind! What profit to a man is a fairy? Thou art that poison-nectar, a woman!"

"Doubtless. But my name, foolish one?"

"Since thou are inaccessible, it should be Durga, Daughter of the Snows." His voice took a tone of command. "Tell me!"

"Ro-shan-a-ra." She murmured each syllable separately.

"The Shining One! Thy name befits thee!"

Seated like a statue on the fretting black horse, Ajit Singh meditated further compliments. The crowd paid them little attention. It was no new thing to see one of the Rajah's guards jesting in this fashion.

"Verily, the name is fitting!" he repeated. "Thy face is like the cold camphor of the moon."

Roshanara breathed: "Not cold to a true lover!"

"He sits before thee! Thy bosom hath the fragrance of sandal, the softness of a parrot's breast——"

Roshanara clapped her hands delightedly. This man was a poet as well as a soldier! Not like the fat moneylender's son at Delhi.

She beamed on him. "Ajit Singh, tell me more!"

"Thy hair is a thunder-cloud in April. Thy little feet——"

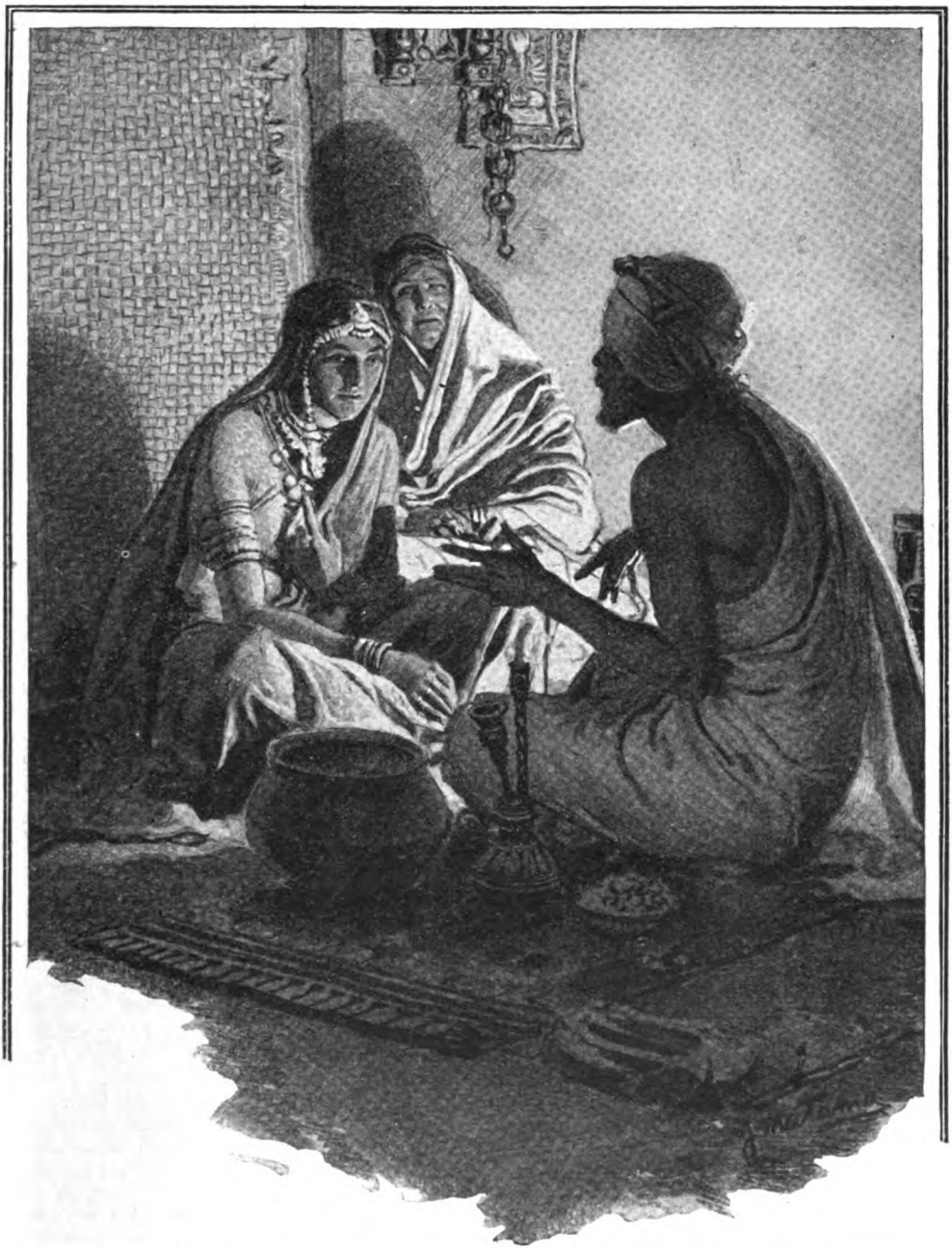
"Wait! Wait till thou hast seen them!"

They were, perhaps, her most valued possession. Proudly she thrust one small bare, jingling foot through the balcony railing.

"A very lotus-bud! At the touch of it a thorn-bush would blossom! Thy crimson mouth——"

His rhapsody ceased abruptly. A bulky figure had rolled out on to the balcony.

"And what is this?" shrilled Tota. "Is



Roshanara, the dancing-girl, and her fat old escort silently watched the soothsayer.

it the King's order that we poor women should hold converse with the riff-raff of the town ?" She waved a disdainful hand. "Go thy ways ! She is not for thee !"

Ajit Singh saluted with mock solemnity, and then laughed up at her.

"That can I believe ! Of a truth, she will be Ruler of all Hindustan—and thou, her Prime Minister !"

"There will be, likewise, a post for thee—as scullion !" Tota snapped back. "Go ! To-morrow night she dances at the palace. If thou hast need of a woman, take thee a wife !"

"Great Queen!—until thou camest I found none worthy."

Tota chuckled. She herself had an eye for a fine man. But this was no occasion for dalliance.

"Come!" she said, and drew her charge towards the balcony window. "Get thee gone!" she cried over her shoulder. "Leave us poor women our virtue!"

Ajit Singh fired a parting shot.

"Thy virtue is a blade of grass in a forest fire!" he flung after her, and set spurs to his horse.

WITHIN the bare whitewashed room Roshanara yielded herself to her guardian's ministrations. It was time for the dancer's evening toilet, the hair-braiding and the massage with scented oils.

Kneading the delicate feet, Tota brooded gloomily. Superstition entered into every moment of her existence. Fortunately, there were charms against all possible mishaps!

She put up a hand to the glass amulet strung round her neck.

"A dark man on a black horse," she muttered. "Thou rememberest the words of the soothsayer?"

Roshanara wrinkled her nose contemptuously. She remembered, but the lone hut in the hills seemed far away; and life was very splendid, and very certain.

"They are all alike," she declared, flippantly. "*Jotishis* and priests—they lie for payment!"

Tota shook her head doubtfully. "But a black horse! Truly, I like it not. A dark shadow—— Moreover, there is Bijli."

"Bijli?"

"Thou hast not heard? The *bazar*-folk talk of him. The black leopard on whom the King's eyes must rest first when he wakes, to ensure good fortune."

Roshanara giggled wickedly. "Mayhap in future——"

"They may rest on thee? It is well said!" Tota regained her spirits. "But be cautious, little one!" she warned. "Kings may have claws as well as leopards."

Roshanara went on examining her face in the lacquered hand-glass.

"I, too, have claws!" she drawled, after a pause, adding a touch of *kohl* to each pencilled eyebrow. "And as men tame leopards, so do I tame men!"

The great banqueting-chamber of the palace was ablaze with light. From where they sat amid the group of dancers and musicians Tota and her charge gazed spell-bound with wonder. In spite of all the stories they had heard, they had never even dreamed of such magnificence.

The astrologers had decreed the day auspicious for a feast in honour of the departing envoys of a neighbouring State, and the old grey-bearded chamberlain had made his arrangements with an eye to the tales they would tell on their return.

The spacious hall, open on all four sides to the fragrant breezes which floated in from the pleasure-gardens, had been built with a lofty roof supported by a colonnade of marble pillars. Affixed to the pillars were massive gilt brackets holding flaming torches of aromatic wood and lamps set in lustres of coloured glass, the beams from which cast twinkling reflections on the ceiling of wrought silver. Along each border of the white marble floor, inlaid with arabesques of semi-precious stones, were rows of tiny fountains, whose sparkling waters rose and fell in crystal basins filled with the perfume of *attar*. From every quarter the eye caught the glitter of jewels and the dazzle of light flashed from the chain-mail corselets of the Rajah's guards.

Roshanara's glance fell on one of the guards standing motionless at the far end of the hall, and she recognized Ajit Singh. A veritable giant of a man! She wondered whether he had noticed her.

In and out among the guests there moved a motley crowd of servitors bearing bowls of savoury *pilao* and curries and sweet-meats, or trays of golden cups filled with wine cooled in the deep recesses of the garden-wells. From a raised dais under a silken canopy there came the monotonous chanting of Brahmin priests, which bid fair to drown the declamations of a poet reciting a Persian love-song of more than doubtful propriety.

At the head of the banquet, cross-legged upon a priceless Persian carpet, was seated the Rajah. From her place in the shadow of a pillar, Roshanara studied him long and anxiously.

She saw a man of about forty years of age, with a ruthless, arrogant face, whose tired eyes, heavy with drugs, blinked drowsily at the spectacle before him. Yet he was the absolute ruler of many thousands of people, an autocrat whose sentence of death was no less fatal than a stroke from the diamond-hilted scimitar which lay across his knee. To his subjects he was a god, to be warded not only from the attacks of human enemies, but also from the "evil eye" and the baleful influences of his contact with humbler folk. This was the duty of his priests and astrologers, and of the nautch-girls who each morning passed the lighted lamp of kneaded rice-flour filled with scented oil in circles round his head.

In his youth he had been a noted warrior, a famous horseman, a man of the open spaces, with whom hawking and the chase

had ranked higher than the love of women. But with peace in his domains had come indulgence, luxury, grossness of body, and the jaded appetites of the sensualist.

Doubtless a monarch difficult to serve, Roshanara thought. Capricious. cruel. She could read men. But a beautiful woman is all-powerful : and was she not Roshanara ?

Her gaze dwelt longingly on the Rajah's jewels. With all the strength of her covetous little soul she was hankering after them. And they were gauds to tempt a woman ! Over his flowing robe of cloth of gold there hung great ropes of lustrous pearls interspaced with uncut rubies. Rings glittered on each finger. In his pale-green turban was fastened an aigrette of osprey plumes and diamonds set round a gigantic emerald. Above his head an attendant waved a fan of peacocks' feathers, and behind him stood his *chashnigirs*—men whose business it was to taste each dish before their master.

At his feet, leashed with a golden chain, lay Bijli, named after the Lightning, the black leopard from the distant jungles of Assam. He was the King's Luck. He had seen favourites come and favourites go. Some had petted, many had envied him. It mattered nothing to Bijli. With a lazy yellow gleam in his steady eyes he had watched them pass.

THE banquet was drawing to a close. The jugglers, acrobats, and rope-dancers had played their parts. Dipping his fingers in an ivory bowl of rosewater, the Rajah gave an order to his chamberlain. It was time for the nautch.

The cluster of musicians parted. To the accompaniment of zithers and clarionets, the clash of cymbals and the tapping of drums, Rukmani, a coarse, handsome girl from the Deccan, swayed across the polished floor. She was the Rajah's favourite dancer ; but her reign had been a long one for a Court beauty, and custom had rendered her careless. There was nothing of elegance to watch as she stamped and postured suggestively in time to the music, her husky voice rising to a nasal shriek, while she leered and shifted the quid of betel-nut which dyed her scarlet mouth.

Roshanara scanned her performance with critical eyes. With growing impatience she waited. Behind her Tota whispered : " After this cow the gazelle ! "

A climax of frenzied stamping, and Rukmani, making her obeisance, swaggered back to her place. The pipes and zithers struck up a haunting melody of the hills. Roshanara stepped lightly into the space reserved for the dancers, and began to sing.

There was an instant hum of admiration. Her short jacket of silver tissue, ending above the waist, revealed the soft curves of her gently-swelling breasts. The voluminous skirt of rose-pink silk embroidered with sprays of silver flowers—it had made a big hole in her and Tota's savings !—was powerless to hide the grace of her slender limbs. From the onlookers there rose a murmur of : " A *pari !* A *pari !* "—and a fairy indeed she seemed in her youth and loveliness, her dark eyes languishing provocatively beneath the gilded lids.

Then, to the sound of the zithers and her own flute-like voice, she commenced to dance. Slowly at first, a dance of weaving arms fluttering a scarf of gauze, rhythm controlled by the tapping of the little feet, which scarcely seemed to touch the marble floor. The dreaming of a maiden fallen in love, but as yet none too certain of her lover. She must lure him ! She must make him a slave to her beauty !

She had already enslaved her audience. They were connoisseurs of the nautch, but never had they beheld art so perfect as that of this slim girl from the hills.

Over the tired face of the Rajah there stole an expression of keener interest, the greedy look of a spoilt child coveting some new and delightful toy. His hand stroked with a lingering caress the smooth black curves of the leopard's body.

He beckoned to the grey-haired chamberlain, and gave an order. Tota, her attention divided between the Rajah and her pupil, swelled with importance. It was the hour of her triumph ! But Rukmani, a queen glimpsing the end of her reign, glowered with cold fury at her latest rival.

The music quickened. Faster ! Faster ! A maiden in the ecstasy of requited love ! In the arms of her lover ! The eye was almost dazzled by the swift intricate steps of the delicate feet. Tota, a past-mistress of her art, sat open-mouthed with pride and wonder. Never before had Roshanara danced like this ! With the final crash of the cymbals came the plaudits of the guests.

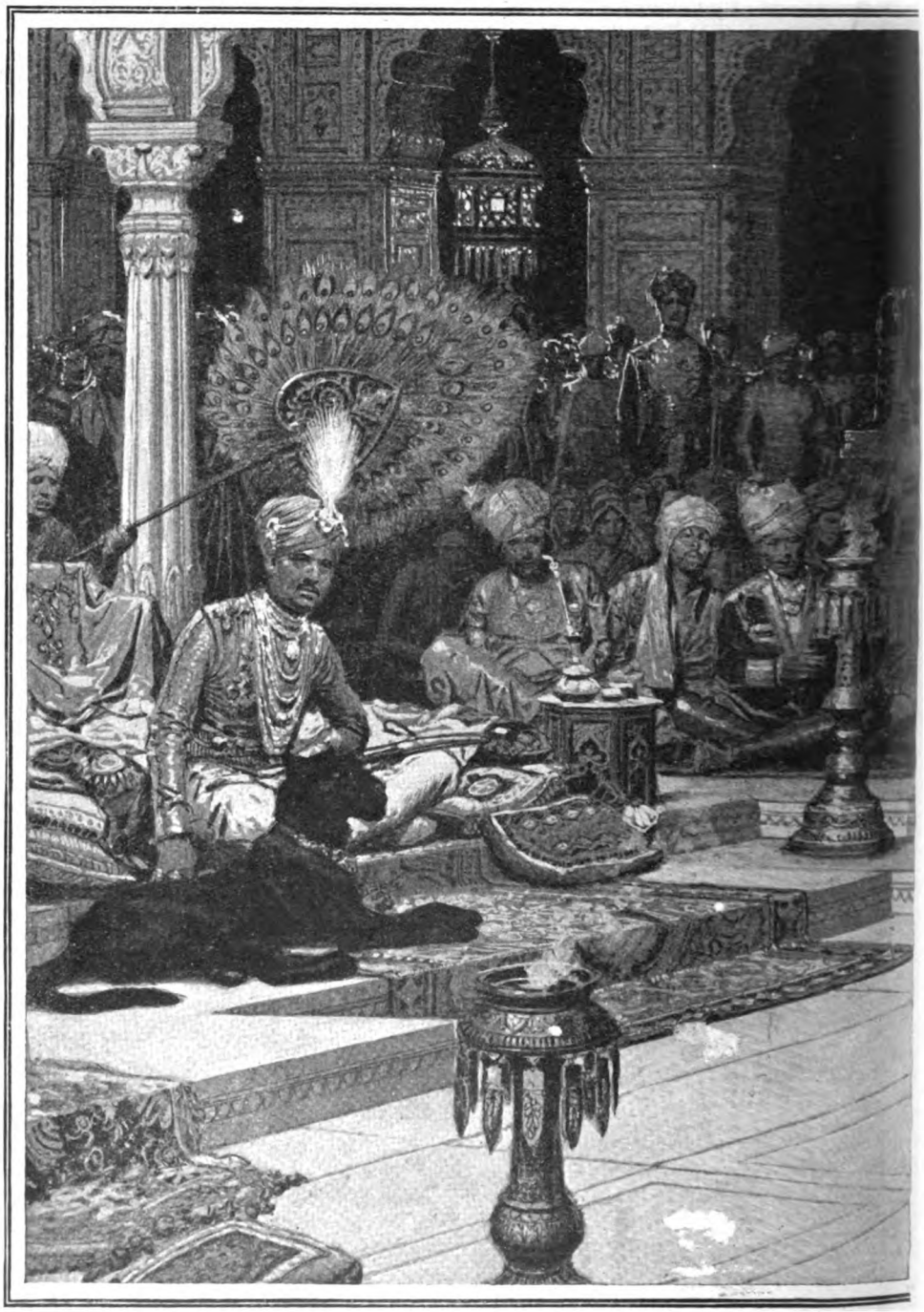
" Surely the gods are favourable, little one ! " Tota exclaimed exultantly, as she led the panting girl from the banqueting-hall. On the terrace beyond a man, immensely fat, with crafty, close-set eyes, was waiting for them. It was Mohan Nazir, the Chief Eunuch.

" Come ! " he ordered, briefly. " It is the King's command."

He led the way to the women's apartments.

THE pampered, indolent life of a Court favourite—for a time Roshanara revelled in it.

Though bounded by the palace walls,



Roshanara commenced to dance. Over the tired of keener interest, the greedy look of a spoilt

hers was not the secluded existence of the Rajah's wives, the high-caste ladies cloistered behind the veil. There was laughter in the gaudily-decorated rooms; gossip and intrigue in the dark, mysterious labyrinths which hummed like a hive beneath the palace.

face of the Rajah there stole an expression child coveting some new and delightful toy.

There were wandering minstrels, snake-charmers, and puppet-shows. Rich and wonderful raiment to be chosen: Tota, now chief handmaiden to the favourite, was in her glory!—her short pleated skirt ballooned with no less than nineteen yards

of silk. Jewellers from Delhi spread out their wares for inspection; and one of Roshanara's first acquisitions was a pair of golden anklets tinkling with tiny lotus-bells. Fitting adornment for feet like lotus-buds: she recalled Ajit Singh's words.

She had troops of attendants; women who fawned on her—all save black-browed Rukmani, who eyed her sourly. She frowned when she thought of Rukmani. Some day she would complain to the Rajah, and have her whipped!

It was pleasant to bask in the scented gardens watered by fountains and cascades. To watch the carrion-kites wheeling in the infinite blue of the cloudless sky, and the bee-suckers flashing like living emeralds from orange-blossom to pomegranate and jasmine.

And then, as time went on, she began to weary of it. After all, she was not a woman of the South, content to loll in the lap of luxury till some new houri should oust her from the King's favour. She was a woman from the hills, high-spirited, adventurous, and apt for love. In spite of the silks and jewels she was weary of it all! What was she better than a king's plaything? A hireling to sing and dance for her master's pleasure?

There were those who reckoned her a queen; yet at the King's caprice her reign would end. She had learnt quickly that she was of less account than the sleek black leopard sunning himself lazily on the veranda, satisfied and secure. Sometimes she found herself jealous of Bijli.

And, above all, she sensed with loathing that the time would surely come when she would be to her master what Rukmani and the others had been—something higher than the King's dancer, something lower than a slave!

Her thoughts would turn to Ajit Singh. Ah!—there indeed was a Man! She recalled the scene from her balcony in the Lal Bazar. A lover—and a poet! How could she meet him again?

WHEN next she saw him it was in a fashion to stir the soul of a woman. It was on the day of the *Dasahra*—the Soldiers' Feast. Soon after sunrise crowds had commenced to troop from the city across the sandy plain towards the great walled enclosure of the fort, where the contests would be held. There, guests of their ruler's bounty, they would witness fights between wild animals, men pitted against men, and feats of horsemanship. But, first of all, the procession, when the Rajah and his Court came to the lists.

The fort was of red sandstone, built many years before by an old Rajput Chief. The enclosure walls were wide enough at the top for two chariots to drive abreast. In the base of them were stables for elephants and horses, and cages for wild beasts.

As the day grew cooler the sightseers massed upon the battlements could descry the long cavalcade winding its way from the town. A band of kettledrums and pipes was followed by horsemen bearing flags emblazoned with the Rajah's arms and devices. Then came the State palanquins escorted by riders on camels and on elephants, whose rocking howdahs were filled with nobles of the Court. Along the line, from scarlet velvet trappings embossed with silver, and from the chain-mail of the horsemen, the sun's rays glinted in flashes of lambent fire.

In the centre of the procession, aloft on an immense two-storeyed equipage of solid silver drawn by a pair of elephants, was seated the Rajah. Above his head, borne by attendants, was the Eastern emblem of royalty, the State umbrella of sky-blue satin fringed with gold. Led horses, elephants, and cavalry brought up the rear.

To a flourish of trumpets the Rajah ascended to his place high up on the fort walls. There had been set there a throne of exquisite workmanship, carved from a solid block of marble and inlaid with bloodstones, agates, and lapis lazuli. A silken awning spread upon gold and silver pillars sheltered it from the rays of the sun. Beside the throne, toying with Bijli's new diamond collar, Roshanara lay on a pile of cushions and gazed eagerly down into the arena.

The Rajah gave the signal; and through the long afternoon the mob roared and shouted with delight as tiger fought with tiger, and almost naked men, wearing leather gloves studded with sharp spikes of horn, tore and battered each other till the sand was red with blood. There were gusts of laughter at the comic interlude—a black bear rending to fragments an army of cardboard puppets until the dogs were loosed to bait him in his turn. The very earth seemed to tremble when two enormous elephants, maddened by bursting squibs, met crashing in headlong impact, warring with interlocking trunks and tusks till one of them went thundering to the ground.

There was a breathing-space while men bearing lances tipped with flaming tow surrounded the victor, and a female elephant enticed away her wounded mate. Then came the great event of the day.

The gates at one end of the arena were flung wide, and to the rattle of drums there rocketed through them a man on a huge black horse.

Roshanara leaned forward upon her

cushions, her soul in her eyes. There was no mistaking that rider! A shout went up from the spectators on the battlements. All Rajputs are horsemen, and this was the game they loved.

Opposite the throne the black horse jarred to a halt, reined back on his haunches whilst Ajit Singh saluted his Chief. Then, with a touch of the spur, he was wheeled inwards and sent flying over the trampled sand to where the victor, swinging his trunk from side to side, glared venomously at his new assailant.

Some twenty paces distant Ajit Singh drew rein and, motionless, waited for the charge. It came; but at the moment when the curving trunk whipped viciously forward, the black horse reared straight up and was swung aside, while his rider yelled defiance at the slate-grey mass hurtling past him.

With a speed amazing for his bulk, the elephant turned and gave chase. Twice at full gallop Ajit Singh circled the arena; then once more wheeled to the centre and waited. But this time he misjudged the swiftness of the charge. Like a stroke from a flail the flying trunk caught the black horse on the shoulder, rolling him and his rider over in the sand. Then, as the great beast dropped to its knees to kill, Ajit Singh sprang from the ground and, dragging his struggling mount to its feet, leaped back into the saddle.

And now he rode straight down the middle of the lists. The crowds were watching him, tense with excitement. They knew what was in his mind; they had seen this feat of horsemanship before, though never at such a pace. At the far end of the enclosure was a dark slit in the walls, a narrow tunnel just wide enough for the passage of a mounted man, but with a roof so low that a horseman must needs crouch level with his horse's head.

Without a check Ajit Singh raced for the opening. A glance over his shoulder, and then, free of the stirrups and one hand gripped in the mane, he flung himself forward along the black horse's neck. A yell went up from the onlookers as rider and steed flashed through to safety! Behind them, a second later, their pursuer's brass-shod tusks were ripping a shower of plaster from the walls.

The cheers broke forth again when Ajit Singh bent before the Rajah to receive a heavy purse of gold. For a moment he stood there, a giant, his dark blue tunic soiled by the dust of the arena; and in that moment his heart caught fire from the ardent gaze of the slender, silk-clad girl reclining on her cushions, a smile on her parted lips.

ROSHANARA went back to her prison aflame! Surely there was no man like him in the world! She loved him! She must meet him again! Tota must help her.

It was in vain that the old handmaiden argued. It was madness, she urged. Discovery would mean death—or worse. Roshanara did not care: she was ready to dare everything! How could such a matter be kept secret? Roshanara turned sulky; there would be no difficulty; the palace gardens were wide; other women had lovers. . . . Tota tried to frighten her; the omens were not favourable; only that morning a vulture had alighted on the roof. Roshanara laughed: "My eagle shall slay thy vulture!"

When commands and cajolery failed, Roshanara had recourse to bribery. If Tota would help her, she should have the pearl bangle which her soul coveted. Tota wavered.

So for three nights the lovers met in the warm fragrance of the orange-groves. Around them was deep silence, save for the plashing of the fountains and the cries of the little owls in the branches of the mango trees. Locked in each other's arms they let the hours slip by: Youth yearning after Youth in a scented garden! The old Eastern poet knew how to word it: "A pair of bees in a nectared lotus."

On the fourth night he besought her to come away with him. He could contrive it, and across the border they would be safe. As for the future, was he not Ajit Singh, a warrior to whom other masters would readily give service?

Tota, quaking in the shelter of a pavilion, could hear the murmur of their voices.

"Beloved, is not this enough for thee?"

"Enough, sayest thou? Can a man quench a raging fire with a handful of straw? Thy beauty hath cast a spell upon me! I am snared in the noose of thy hair!"

Something rustled in the bushes, and Ajit Singh's face set grim.

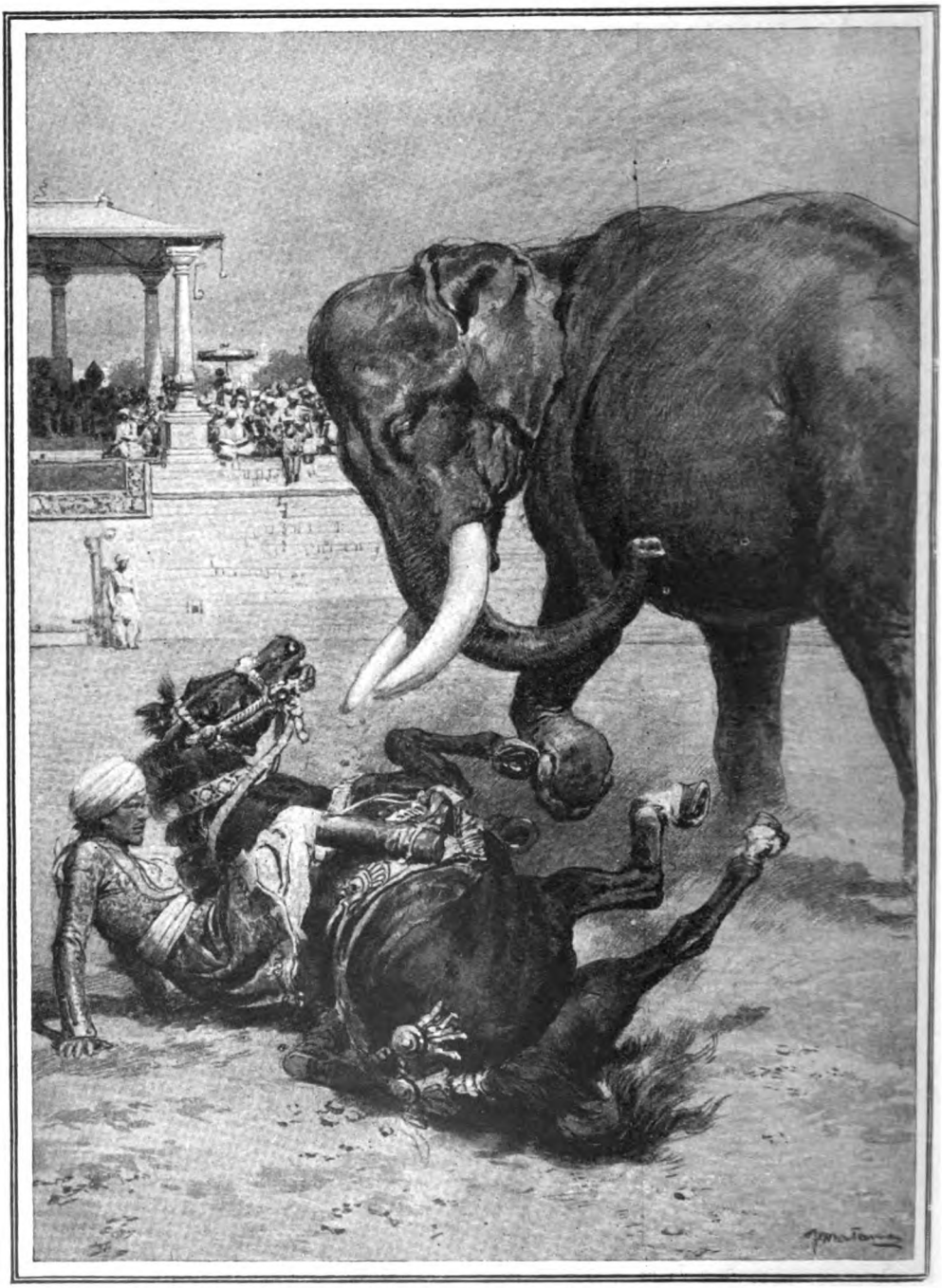
Roshanara laughed softly. "Fear not, beloved! It was Tota. She keeps guard."

So he turned again to his pleading; and Roshanara listened and loved.

There came no further sound as Rukmani, thirsting for revenge, stole through the shadows to where Mohan Nazir, the Chief Eunuch, waited for her in the palace.

IT was long past noon when Mohan Nazir brought the Rajah's summons. There was nothing strange in this: the King had awakened from his opium dreams, he was in a mood for dalliance.

While Tota arranged the silken folds the girl's mind was busied with her lover.



Like a stroke from a flail the flying trunk caught the black horse on the shoulder, rolling him and his rider over in the sand.

What would his plan be? Would it be for to-night?—or for to-morrow? He should find her ready—— !

There was no one in the King's chambers. Only the black leopard asleep on the veranda. From the great divan she smiled lazily at Mohan Nazir as he placed beside her a sandal-wood stool, and upon it a

lacquered box. Without a word he vanished through the curtains.

She drew the box towards her. Some proof of the royal favour, she supposed. A set of trinkets, a bright-flowered skirt for the dancing? What did such baubles matter to her now? There was only one gift she craved for—the love of a man! She opened wide the lid——

And then, ablaze with fury, she was standing beside the divan looking down upon that pale, still face, whose sightless eyes were staring up at her from the box. There was no taint of fear in the bitter, passionate anger that consumed her, though she knew that for herself there must be sentence of death. What could there be but death for a slave found faithless to her master? They had slain her lover: soon they would slay her. It mattered little, if only before she died—— !

What could she do? Her hand flew to the jewelled dagger at her belt. He would be coming soon—this king who had decreed death for her lover. If she could strike one blow before they led her away—— ! It was not possible. He would come as a tyrant comes, close shielded by his guards.

Ah !—but there was still one thing that she could do to make death sweeter! Her glance had fallen on Bijli sleeping at the length of his golden chain. The King's Luck !—she could rob the King of that! One thrust of the knife deep into that smooth, black throat! She drew the dagger, and crept silently across the carpeted floor——

She sprang erect as the curtains at the end of the room were snatched asunder. It had pleased the King to watch her! On that cruel, arrogant countenance she read no hint of mercy. He was a monarch lowering at a slave who had betrayed him, at a toy which he was about to break. There were attendants entering at his command.

Yet she did not seem a slave as, lovely and defiant, she faced him. Without a tremor she heard the order given to Mohan Nazir. For Tota the *oubliette*. For herself death within the hour. That, at least, was merciful! With all the strength of her passionate soul she was hungering for vengeance upon this monarch who had dared to rob her of Love. If she could only strike him dead—now—*or hereafter!*

ON the moonlit terrace of his summer-pleasaunce the King on his ebony couch tossed restlessly. The dream was ever the same. A dream of a dead woman's face, vengeful and very fair.

For many days it had been thus. Physicians, astrologers, priests, all were at fault. Charms and incantations, amulets woven from the sacred grass and leaves of basil, naught had availed him. Far from the heat of the plains, amid valleys cooled by waterfalls, the King was seeking the peace that did not come.

And whilst he lay there, drugged to a troubled slumber, a chill wind crept down the hillside, ruffling the palm fronds. High up the wooded slopes the direful laugh of a hyena echoed through the ravines. The King shuddered to wakefulness.

At his call there came men hastening for his commands. But he gave no order; and they stood around him silent, scanning the haunted visage of their lord. They watched him craning, wide-eyed with terror, at a form they could not see, listening to a sound they could not hear. Beside his master, Bijli, his yellow eyes aglare in the moonlight, crouched sullenly at bay.

With lips drawn back in a snarl from the gleaming fangs the great cat sprang. Sprang and thudded to the marble pavement, striking with taloned paws—at empty air! Awestruck, they watched him fight an unseen enemy. Gnashing in impotent rage, he strove to free his neck from those invisible hands which throttled him, forcing him downwards with a grip of steel.

The snarling ceased, choked in the gasping throat. Wrenched sideways, the leopard's head was twisted until the sinews snapped like parting cords. The strong black body quivered for an instant, and lay still.

The stricken King sank back upon his cushions. His Luck had passed, wrested from him by that pale shadowy figure with the vengeful eyes.

Across the terrace, down the marble steps, growing fainter in the silvery radiance of the garden, went the tinkle of anklet-bells.

THE CLEVEREST MURDER—IN FACT OR FICTION?

A SYMPOSIUM OF EMINENT WRITERS

The two young men had a furious quarrel, followed by a fight.

"IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EVIDENCE"

By
Mrs. BELLOC LOWNDES,
Author of "What Really Happened," etc.

IN my opinion far the best murder in fiction is to be found in Mr. Oliver Onions' remarkable story, "In Accordance with the Evidence." What is more, in the chapter entitled "King's Cross," there is a most striking analysis of a murderer's mind, and of what really leads to what may be called intelligent murder.

It is difficult to condense, even poorly and inadequately, any portion of a work of art. I will, however, be sufficiently daring to attempt to do this with regard to the murder of Archie Merridew by "Jeff" Jeffries. Sufficient to say, before we come to the actual drama, that Jeffries had the strongest reason for both hating and despising Merridew, and for wishing to prevent at all costs Merridew's marriage with Evie Soames, the girl Jeffries secretly loved.

This being so, he planned what I claim to be the most ingenious murder plot in fiction, or, for the matter of that, in fact. With no other weapon in his possession but a piece of paper, on which he had written down an apparently simple and, in a sense, most convincing letter, he proceeded to do that in conjunction with his victim which was ultimately to lead to the total, and from his point of view much-to-be-desired, obliteration of Archie Merridew.

It is a week before the wedding, and the two young men, both London clerks and both incidentally studying shorthand, have arranged to spend an evening in Merridew's rooms for speed practice in Pitman's.

Merridew starts the dictation by reading, to his supposed friend, the speech of a politician, as reported in a newspaper. Then comes Jeffries' turn to dictate to the other. He chooses the police column of the same paper, and after having dictated a paragraph on "bucket-shop frauds," he passes straight

on without pause to "A Pathetic Confession," which contains, or so Merridew of course believes, a letter running as follows :—

Dearest Mother,—

I cannot face the disgrace, but there is only one thing to do. I trust God will forgive me. I am not afraid to die, I am afraid to live and face it. I cannot do E. this wrong. Please, dear Mother, think of me as I used to be. I have tried and tried, but it is all no good, and I am better out of the world. Give my love to everybody and try, dear Mother, to forgive me.

Merridew, after having recorded in shorthand this at once pathetic and yet in certain circumstances not unusual type of epistle, calls out " Time," and the two young men begin to race each other over the transcription of what each has dictated. When they have finished, following their usual practice, each signs his transcript of his shorthand exercise, and Jeffries leaves with Merridew's exercise, as well as his own, slipped between the leaves of a text-book.

I wonder if by this time any of my readers who have not read the book can guess what happened a few days later? Notably after the two young men had had a furious quarrel, followed by a fight, in the very room where they had carried out their shorthand practice? A friend to whom I read what I have written says she knows quite well now the reason why, when Merridew was found dead by hanging in his sitting-room, the verdict at the inquest ran, " in accordance with the evidence "; the fact that Evie Soames's coming bridegroom had taken his own life being clearly proved by a letter written in shorthand which was found in his pocket addressed to his mother.

He told Hedgspeth that all he wanted was an unscrupulous lawyer, and promised him five hundred dollars if he would recommend one.

THE HOLMES-PITEZEL CASE.

By **J. S. FLETCHER,**

Author of
" The Charing Cross Mystery," etc.

TO give a really definite answer to the question, "What is the cleverest murder—in fact or fiction?" is a somewhat difficult matter, which is further complicated by the difference between crime of fact and crime of pure imagination. A clever murder in fiction is the result, surely, of the novelist's ingenuity and fertility of invention; he has the advantage, too, that he can manufacture his evidence. But if by " clever " is meant a murder improbable of, or most likely to escape, detection, I think it would be difficult to beat the murder of Benjamin F. Pitezel, of St. Louis, Missouri, by one H. H. Holmes, who ranks in America as the greatest criminal of the last hundred years. The murder of Pitezel, in fact, was but one in a series of murders. Holmes (who was also known as Howard, and whose real name was Herman W. Mudgett) had set out to murder the whole Pitezel family of father, mother, and five children, his motive being the acquisition of insurance money. He succeeded in getting rid of Pitezel and three of the children, and but for one slight and apparently unimportant slip he would

without doubt have succeeded, too, in murdering Mrs. Pitezel and the other two children, and have reaped the benefit of his misdeeds without detection. This, at any rate, was the opinion of the late H. B. Irving, who devoted a chapter to Holmes (based on various contemporary American documents and publications) in his book on " Remarkable Criminals." Holmes himself admitted that slip—what it really amounted to was that he broke faith with a man in order to avoid payment of five hundred dollars. The breaking faith led to a complete revelation of a secret otherwise as safe as the grave, and cost him his life.

The story of the detection of Holmes's crimes runs with a fair amount of simplicity. On September 4th, 1894, a man known as B. F. Perry was found dead in a second-storey back room of a house in Callowhill Street, Philadelphia. The face was charred beyond recognition ; medical examination went to show that the man had died from the inhalation of fumes of chloroform. Eleven days later the body was buried. Before this the Fidelity Mutual Life Association in Philadelphia had received a notice from one Jephtha D. Howe, an attorney of St. Louis, stating that B. F. Perry was Benjamin F. Pitezel of that city, and was insured in this company for ten thousand dollars, the insurances having been effected in Chicago in November of the previous year. After some correspondence Howe came to Philadelphia, accompanied by Alice Pitezel, the dead man's daughter. The insurance people said that they accepted the fact that Perry and Pitezel were one and the same man, but were not satisfied that the body found at Callowhill Street was Pitezel's body.

Here came in Holmes, introduced as a man from Wilmette, Illinois, who knew Pitezel well. Holmes was shown the disinterred body—and at once became candidly practical. He " took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, put on rubber gloves, and, taking a surgeon's knife from his pocket," proceeded to do various things which proved the body to be that of Pitezel. The insurance money was shortly afterwards paid over to Howe by the entirely satisfied company, and there, apparently, was an end of the matter. Now, as a matter of fact, Holmes had murdered Pitezel at the house in Callowhill Street, probably on the 22nd of August, Howe was in collusion with him, and the murder of Pitezel himself was but a stage in a series of wholesale murders. In a statement made by Holmes after his arrest he confessed to having committed twenty-seven murders ; this he subsequently recanted or discounted ; the probability is that he actually murdered ten people. He had been engaged in fraud all his life—during his training as a medical student and afterwards as a druggist ; he was clever, ingenious, and cold-blooded, and nothing proves his callousness more than the murder of the Pitezel children, whom he did to death and buried in a mysterious building in Chicago, where their charred bones were found secreted beneath the cellar floor. As to his other murders, they were all of a piece with those of the Pitezel family.

ACCORDING to expert opinion on this case Holmes would never have been found out but for one of those foolish slips which the cleverest criminal almost invariably makes.

In July, 1894, Holmes, under the name of Howard, was in prison at St. Louis on a charge of fraud. He there met a man named Hedgspeth, who was under sentence of twenty years' imprisonment for train robbery. He told Hedgspeth that he had devised a splendid scheme for defrauding an insurance company ; all he wanted was an unscrupulous lawyer, and he promised Hedgspeth five hundred dollars if he would recommend one. Hedgspeth recommended Jephtha D. Howe. What happened between Howe and Holmes we know—but Hedgspeth never got his five hundred dollars ! Consequently, in October, when the Pitezel affair began to be talked about, Hedgspeth denounced Holmes to the prison authorities, who, in their turn, informed the insurance company ; the insurance company put Pinkerton's famous detectives on Holmes's track. From that moment Holmes's fate was sealed. Had he paid Hedgspeth his five hundred dollars he would have been safe, and would probably have murdered many other people. He was essentially a murderer. Like many of his tribe, he had a power of attracting women, and availed himself freely of it ; as is often the case in these matters, he had no particular good looks, and was, indeed, of commonplace appearance. He had three wives at one time ; some of his wives he murdered ; he also murdered the wife of an *employé* and her little girl and a girl-typist who for a time lived with him as his wife—all these he murdered in his Chicago " castle " and buried in his cellar. But he was unsuspected of these crimes, and he would have gone utterly unsuspect of the subsequent Pitezel murders if he had not been so mean as to grudge Hedgspeth the money he had promised him.

(Fuller particulars of Holmes's career may be found in Duke's " Celebrated Criminal Cases of America," Geyer's " The Holmes-Pitezel Case " ; Holmes's " Own Story " (unveracious), and H. B. Irving's " Remarkable Criminals.")

He desiccated the body by scientific means and substituted it for the mummy in the case.

A MUSEUM PIECE.

By E. C. BENTLEY,

Author of "Trent's Last Case," etc.

I HAVE never thought very highly of murders known to have been committed in real life. These, it has often been said, are probably a small proportion of those actually committed. I do not share that opinion, the holders of which seem to me to underestimate the difficulties of unsuspected murder, and, what is worse, to take a despondent view of human nature. But admitting the likelihood of many unsuspected murders having been committed by medical men, detectives, and writers of detective stories—the three classes of persons best qualified to conceal the fact that a crime had been perpetrated—I doubt very much if they outnumber the recognized murders; and, anyhow, we know nothing about them. As for the others, few indeed of these reflect much credit on the ability of the murderer.

There is one, however, which for both simplicity of conception and economy of means has, to my knowledge, no rival; and that is the murder by John Perry of his mother and brother, in the seventeenth century. One of their neighbours having mysteriously disappeared, Perry confessed that he and his relatives had killed the man for his money; and although no remains could be found, the law at that time allowed of their being brought to trial for the alleged crime. All three were found guilty and hanged, the jury finding it impossible to accept the defence of the mother and brother, that John had invented a story which involved his own death on the scaffold. Later on the missing man turned up alive and well.

Among the very numerous brilliant murders in fiction it is not easy to pick out one as the cleverest. The late Grant Allen wrote of a sick man who, though expected to recover, was in a state in which the least shock would be fatal. He was visited by a friend (a medical man) who had in his coat-pocket a small sponge-bag full of ice; and after keeping his hand in that pocket for some time, the visitor, in the presence of the hospital doctors, slipped that hand under the patient's back, ostensibly in order to ease his position. The man died instantly, and no one imagined that a crime had been committed.

In Mr. Chesterton's Father Brown tale, "The Wrong Shape," a doctor attending a sick and world-weary poet begins by administering a sleeping-draught to his patient, who is in a ground-floor room, and leaves him there. Later, walking in the garden, he glances through the window into the room, and anxiously declares to those with him that he does not like the attitude in which the patient is lying—the possibility of suicide being in the air. Hurrying indoors, he stabs his victim to the heart in the few seconds before Father Brown follows him into the room, and turns to the priest with the announcement,

" He's done it." How Father Brown found him out does not matter. It is enough to say that no one else could have done so.

But I think first place should be given to Mr. Jellicoe, the Egyptologist in Mr. Austin Freeman's "The Eye of Osiris." An unusually fine mummy-case, with the mummy sealed up within, had been accepted as a gift by the British Museum authorities, who, however, had not yet sent for it. Having killed his man, Mr. Jellicoe desiccated the body by scientific means and substituted it for the mummy in the case. This he proceeded to re-seal and hand over to the Museum, where it was given a glass case of honour. To dispose of the dry bones of the mummy was an easy task, with plenty of time for its execution; it was also easy to fabricate evidence going to show that the victim had been alive some time after his remains were deposited in the Museum. He had simply disappeared, as people not infrequently do.

Dr. Thorndyke was called in by the relatives, which was hardly fair to Mr. Jellicoe or to the British Museum. He, of course, performed the impossible. It is due to Mr. Jellicoe to add that, when arrested, he declared that his victim's death had been due to an accident—a statement which could not be disproved, even by Dr. Thorndyke. But Mr. Jellicoe seriously compromised his position, in my judgment, by taking prussic acid immediately afterwards. This outline gives a very imperfect idea of the way in which he had closed every loophole for detection. He ought never to have been found out; and his I should call the cleverest murder known to me in fiction.

From a certain unscrupulous chemist he bought some of the stuff at an exorbitant figure.

MURDER AT A DISTANCE.

By **WILLIAM LE QUEUX,**

Author of "Revelations of the Secret Service," etc.

EXCLUDING the exploits of the famous "Bluebeard" Landru—in the investigations of which I, at the invitation of the French police, assisted—or crimes committed by means of the native Malay time-poisons, which during the past two years have attracted the attention of expert European toxicologists, the most subtle ingenuity exercised by any modern assassin is, in my opinion, that of which the elegant Belgian Baron Jules de Boek was guilty. The facts were in detail related to me by the famous head of the Paris Sûreté.

Baron de Boek, a wealthy man who held controlling interest in an important line of steamers trading between Antwerp, the Congo, and the River Plate, and lived in a big white mansion in the Avenue Louise, in Brussels, fell in love with a sprightly young dancer at the Palais d'Été, and

conceived the idea of ridding himself of his elderly wife. Poison suggested itself, but what poison? For a year he hesitated, and indeed purchased more than one obvious drug, but being a man with a keen business mind he feared to take the step lest analysis be made by the modern medico-legists, who, by the mirror test, can determine a millionth part of a grain of arsenic in the human body.

Fortune, however, favoured him, inasmuch as one day he read in the Paris *Matin* that Professor Michaud, the most famous of the French toxicologists of to-day—whose real name I regret I must conceal, for reasons which will become obvious—had arrived at the Hotel Royal at Dinard to spend the summer. In consequence he packed his suit-case and duly arrived at that smart establishment next to the Casino, where he quickly scraped an acquaintance with the famous pathologist, often going long walks with him for exercise.

One day the Baron led the conversation upon a poison case which was coming before the Assizes of the Seine, and in which the Professor was to give expert evidence. "I suppose," remarked the Baron, "many people are secretly poisoned, and the assassin is never discovered?" The Professor agreed that such was the fact, adding: "There are, however, many poisons which could be very easily administered and secret death inevitably produced, but fortunately the knowledge is concealed from the general public. Nor is it right that they should be known." Feeling it wise not to press for further information, the Baron very cleverly dropped the subject. Two days later, however, he pretended to receive a telegram recalling him to Belgium, and he left.

SIX months went by, when again he saw by the papers that the Professor was spending a few weeks at Cannes. Thither he went, pretending great surprise at finding the Professor in the hotel. The pleasant acquaintance was at once renewed, when, during a morning walk, the Baron returned to the subject of secret poisoning. Quite inadvertently the old Professor named a certain highly dangerous but little known drug by which, he said, any person could be killed in the most complete secrecy. "If administered by the mouth the drug is tasteless," he said. "Used for a month upon the victim, he would greatly improve in health and put on weight. In the second month loss of weight, weakness, and a general condition of being run-down would be noticed. This would continue, but sudden withdrawal of the drug would mean death within fifteen days or so, with every symptom of heart affection, which medical men would at once certify as natural causes. It is one of the most dangerous drugs known," he added.

With this information the Baron left France and, after many inquiries, went to Frankfort, where lived a certain unscrupulous chemist whom the police of Europe had for some time held in suspicion. From him he bought some of the stuff at an exorbitant figure. Back in Brussels, he gave his wife daily doses of the drug in her food. Later she began to decline, when the family doctor was called in. "Madame is run-down. She wants a change," he declared. "Would a sea-voyage in one of my ships to Buenos Ayres do her any good?" suggested the Baron. "The very thing," replied the doctor. So in due course Madame and her sister sailed from Antwerp—without the drug! Death from heart disease occurred in thirteen days, and, the boat being a slow one, the body was buried at sea. Within six months the Baron, feeling himself secure, married the dancer and went to live in a luxurious apartment in Paris. Meanwhile the Frankfort police paid a domiciliary visit to the chemist and there found a record of the transaction which was, after considerable difficulty, traced to the murderer. One night the Paris police went to arrest him, but he managed to take his own life with the automatic pistol which he always carried. Hence his subtle and dastardly crime has never, until now, reached the public.

This Symposium will be continued next month.

UNCLE JASPER'S PUZZLE BOOK

By HENRY E. DUDENEY

CHRISTMAS is always the occasion for a merry reunion of the Sharpe family at their country house in Kent. Plans are laid some time in advance for pastimes and festivities, and these provide for all the old-fashioned favourites such as Acting Charades, Oranges and Lemons, and Roger de Coverley. Even a collection of puzzles is prepared for the Christmas dessert, and these are generally left to Uncle Jasper, who can always be depended upon for some good things. But unfortunately he was prevented from attending the gathering last year, and some of the family were wondering what they should do without him. How on earth could they manage without Uncle Jasper's puzzles? However, there was really no need for any anxiety, for when the dessert was reached the head of the family sprang a surprise on them.

"A few days ago," said Mr. Sharpe, "I received a letter from my brother Jasper, whom we so miss to-night. He says: 'I am on my way to the Valley of the Amazon, where I am convinced enough rubber may be found to provide the whole world, if only a way can be devised for the destruction of the deadly fungi that attack the trees. This is the latest puzzle I have set myself to solve. As I cannot be with you all at Christmas, here is an old note-book of mine in which I have recorded many puzzles met with in my wanderings. Perhaps some of these may prove acceptable.'"

This announcement was received with shouts of undoubted pleasure, for one could hear, amid the din, such expressions as "Good old Jasper!" "Priceless!" and "Top hole!"

Perhaps I should explain that Jasper Sharpe is of a roaming disposition and has been a great traveller. At one time you would find him looking for gold in Alaska and another time prospecting for silver in South America. You might hear of him to-day doing something or other in Central Africa and to-morrow in an aeroplane in the region of the North Pole. That he had amassed a good sum of money on his varied adventures was beyond doubt, though he spent most of it in successive explorations that fed his unquenchable passion. But all through life he preserved a curious hobby for solving puzzles, for which he was always on the alert. He was not one of those who, when confronted with a hard poser, would wave it aside with the remark, "Life is not long enough for such things." Nor would he scorn an easy one with the words, "Childishly absurd! I solved it at first glance." He always insisted that a good puzzle might be very difficult or very easy—it was just as it happened. The interest of the thing under consideration was something quite apart.

Mr. Sharpe proceeded to pick out particular puzzles that he had marked as most likely to interest. I give them just as he read them out, with no comment of my own. The description of the members of the party is not, on this occasion, necessary for my purpose. It is the puzzles alone that concern us.

MONKEYS AND NUTS.

I WAS a short time ago in the Zoo monkey-house, and noticed an old man seated in a corner and looking very disconsolate.

"What is your trouble?" I inquired.

"I am worried over these nuts," he replied.

"What is the difficulty?"

"Well, I find that if I divide all the nuts amongst the eleven monkeys in the first cage I shall have one nut over. If I divide them equally amongst the thirteen monkeys in the second cage I shall have eight left. And if I divide them amongst the seventeen monkeys in the last cage three nuts will remain. What on earth am I to do, as I must let the animals share equally?"

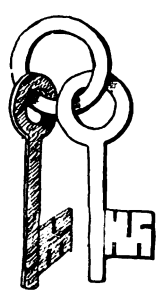
"Why not divide them," I said, "amongst the forty-one monkeys in all three cages?"

"I have thought of that, but there would still be some over, and if I divide them amongst the monkeys in any two cages I shall still have some left. Dear me! Dear me! Whatever shall I do?"

As I saw that I could not help him I walked away, and outside ran up against the keeper from whom the mentally afflicted man had slipped away. Later on I worked out the smallest number of nuts that the poor fellow could have had in his bag, and mused on the strange difficulties with which some people seem to be confronted.

THE KEYS AND RING.

DURING my stay on one of the larger Cannibal Islands in the Pacific Ocean, as the guest of King Ketcham, I became on very intimate terms with His Majesty's chief jailer. One day I found him somewhat disturbed in mind owing to his having discovered that one of his prisoners was in possession of a couple of keys on a ring, as shown in the illustration.



"But they have no possible use as a means of escape," I said, "since they are only made of cardboard."

"Very true," he said, "but the man who can do such a thing must be a wizard and a dangerous man." He then pointed out to me that the keys and ring had been cut out of a single piece of cardboard, without any break or join anywhere.

Since my escape from the island I have found it very interesting to discover how such a little feat can be performed.

THE ARAB'S PUZZLE.

IT was an ancient Arab who gave me one of the most difficult problems that I have ever tackled. He wrote down letters of the alphabet in this order:—

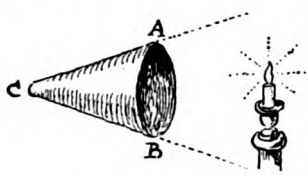
A B C D × E F G H I = A C G E F H I B D

Every letter, he said, stood for a different Arabic

numeral, one to nine (nought excluded). The number represented by the first four digits, when multiplied by the number containing five digits, equals the number containing all the nine digits. and the puzzle is to substitute the digits for letters, so that the thing works.

BLOWING OUT THE CANDLE.

ONE night, when I was wandering about in the Western States of America, I dropped into a drinking saloon and found the boys engaged in putting to one another various questions, paradoxes, and oddities. An old man, who had been silent throughout, rolled a sheet of paper into the form of a hollow cone, like a megaphone. He then offered to bet a half-dollar to any man that he could not put out the candle standing on the counter with one blow through the cone.



Three boys accepted the challenge, but all failed. Then he showed them how it might be done without any trick whatever.

A MOTORING PUZZLE.

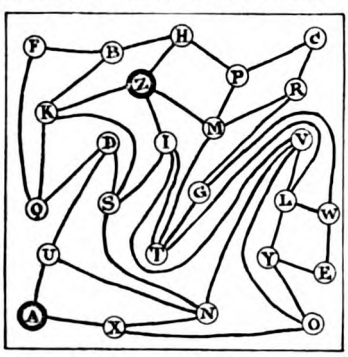
I WAS with my friend Atkinson, riding in the wild country between New York and San Francisco, in his motor-car. We were running from Blue Gap to Sandyville when we met another car and pulled up for a chat. We found that we had travelled 72 miles farther than the American (who left Sandyville at the time we left Blue Gap), and it took us 13½ hours to get to Sandyville and the American 24 hours to get to Blue Gap. How far was it from Blue Gap to Sandyville?

FIND THE SQUARES.

IT was in the Australian Bush, when I was studying the life of the wombat, that a man asked me this question. What number is that which, added separately to 100 and 164, will make them both perfect square numbers?

MY SOUTH AMERICAN TOUR.

AT the time that I was engaged in my big prospecting expedition in South America I was confronted with an

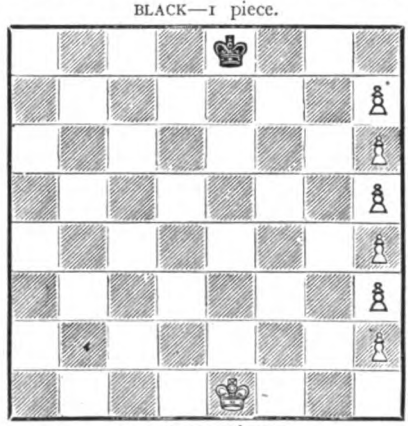


interesting route problem. Starting from A, I had to end my tour at Z, as shown in the accompanying sketch plan, where all the practicable roads from place to place are indicated by the lines. It was necessary for me to visit every place once, and once only, and never to go along the same road twice. Try as I would I could find no possible route for doing this, because no matter how I went I always got to Z without visiting all the places. Can we find a route that will leave as few places as possible unvisited?

THE SPANIARD'S CHESS PUZZLE.

I WAS on a visit to the port Gijon, in Spain, when I made the acquaintance of an old Spaniard who shared my interest in the game of chess. We had many games together, and he showed me some curious puzzles on the chessboard. We were discussing the possibility and impossibility of certain positions of the pieces when he set up the men as in the accompanying diagram. He asked me if I thought that that position could possibly arise in a game of chess, strictly played, no matter how absurd. For some time we examined the position together, and as the pawns

BLACK—1 piece.



WHITE—7 pieces.

could only reach their present position by the capture of fifteen pieces, every one of the fifteen pieces that Black had lost must have been taken by a pawn. In the end we agreed that the position was quite possible, but then the question arose as to the fewest possible moves. I have since constructed an imaginary, though quite legitimate, game of chess that will reach the given position in what I am convinced is the fewest possible moves. The moves can, of course, be considerably varied, but I feel certain that my game is the shortest possible.

A JUVENILE POSER.

I HAVE often found that youngsters may be very smart at puzzles. They are ingenious at suggesting quibbles that break through the rules of some little problem that you propose and in suggesting new answers. I once asked a little maid in Dublin, "When is a fish most out of water?" and when I gave the answer, "When it's a perch in a birdcage," she immediately capped it with the suggestion that the answer might also be. "When it is a sole on the boot," or "When it is a jack-in-the-box," or "When it is a skate on the foot," or "When it is a place on the top of the bus," or "When it is a dab at lawn tennis." She showed signs of going on interminably, so I asked her if she could give me something of her own. She immediately drew a simple L on a piece of paper and asked me to turn it into an N with one stroke of the pencil. As I gazed at the letter in perplexity she said that the N must be the same height as the L and stand upright, but the stroke may be as long and winding

as I liked so long as I did not lift my pencil from the paper. She assured me that it was quite easy—when you know how to do it. And as she showed me her method I was not disposed to contradict that statement.

BUYING PEACHES.

I WAS walking down one of the streets of a favourite English seaside resort when I happened to run up against my old friend, Rackbraine, who was coming out of a fruiterer's shop with a small bag of peaches.

"Are peaches cheap to-day?" I asked him. For a moment or two he did not answer. Then he said, in his characteristic way:—

"Well, you have to pay for six dozen peaches as many shillings as the man is selling peaches for thirty-two shillings. You may like to work out the price per peach?"

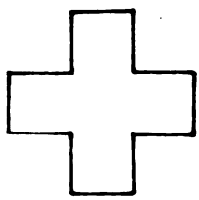
THE TOWER OF PISA.

WHEN I was on a little tour in Italy, collecting material for my book on "Improvements in the Cultivation of Macaroni," I happened to be one day on the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa in company with an American stranger. "Some lean!" said my companion. "I guess we can build a bit straighter in the States. If one of our skyscrapers in New York bent in this way there would be a hunt round for the architect."

I remarked that the point at which we leant over was exactly one hundred and seventy-nine feet from the ground, and he put to me this question: "If an elastic ball was dropped from here, and on each rebound rose exactly one-tenth of the height from which it fell, can you say what distance the ball would travel before it came to rest?" I found it a very interesting proposition.

CHING'S CUTTING-OUT PUZZLE.

IT was during my stay in Hong-Kong that I met a wily old Chinaman who first drew my attention to the remarkable possibilities of "Tangrams," which had been known to his countrymen for thousands of years. I tried with puzzle after puzzle that I could remember of the cutting-out class and failed to defeat him. He always seemed to be able to go one better. For example, I gave him the Greek cross, with which everybody to-day is familiar, and asked him to cut it into four pieces with two clips of the scissors so that they would fit together and form a square.



"No want two cuts," he said. "Do it in one." I said it was impossible, but, with an artful smile, he folded up the cross and then with one clip of the scissors produced his four pieces, which certainly fitted together and formed a perfect square. This I thought was so ingenious that I made a careful note of how it may be done. And yet it is not difficult if you give it a little thought, though I considered it too good to be left unrecorded.

(Solutions next month.)

SOLUTIONS TO LAST MONTH'S "PERPLEXITIES."

828.—ANOTHER TARGET PUZZLE.

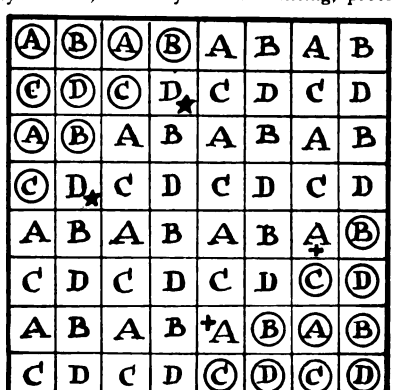
ONE man scored 50, 10, 5, 3, 2, 1, and another scored 25, 20, 20, 3, 2, 1, and the last scored 25, 20, 10, 10, 5, 1.

829.—CURIOUS SQUARE NUMBERS.

ALL numbers that comply with the conditions must be either of the form $81n+31$ or $81n+50$. The two smallest answers are 355 of the first form and 455 of the second. In the first case the square is 126025, which gives $14002+7$, and in the second case the square is 207025, which divided by 9 gives 23002 and remainder 7. In both cases the digits of the quotient add to 7.

830.—MOVING COUNTER PUZZLE.

THIS puzzle is quite impossible of solution, and here is my curious, but easy and convincing, proof. As there are no simple moves, but only leaps, those counters that are on the squares marked A can only be transferred to the other squares marked A in its own system, and so with B, C, and D. Every counter must keep to its own system of sixteen squares, and can never pass into one of the other systems. Now, note that at the start we have three A's, three B's, three C's, and one D, while at the bottom corner we need to have one A, three B's, three C's, and three D's. To solve the puzzle it is therefore necessary that two counters moving on the A system should be transferred to squares on the D system, which is not possible, and therefore the thing cannot possibly be done. Now add two more counters on the D squares marked with stars, and mark the two A squares indicated by crosses as to be occupied at the end. Now, as we have three counters on every system at the start and in the final position, the thing is quite possible. In fact, it is so easy that the reader will then solve the puzzle without any trouble whatever.



831.—MISSING WORD PUZZLE.

THE words are:—

(1) ENTRANCE. (2) DESERT.
(3) SUBJECTS. (4) OBJECT.

832.—MAGIC FIFTEEN PUZZLE.

MOVE in the following order: 12, 8, 4, 3, 2, 6, 10, 9, 13, 15, 14, 12, 8, 4, 7, 10, 9, 14, 12, 8, 4, 7, 10, 9, 6, 2, 3, 10, 9, 6, 5, 1, 2, 3, 6, 5, 3, 2, 1, 13, 14, 3, 2, 1, 13, 14, 3, 12, 15, 3—fifty moves in all.

In solution to 824, the numbers 567, 729, and 891 were inserted by mistake and 605 omitted. In 826, if we ignore the common practice of cancelling the 0, we can solve by $310)101741268\overline{40}$.

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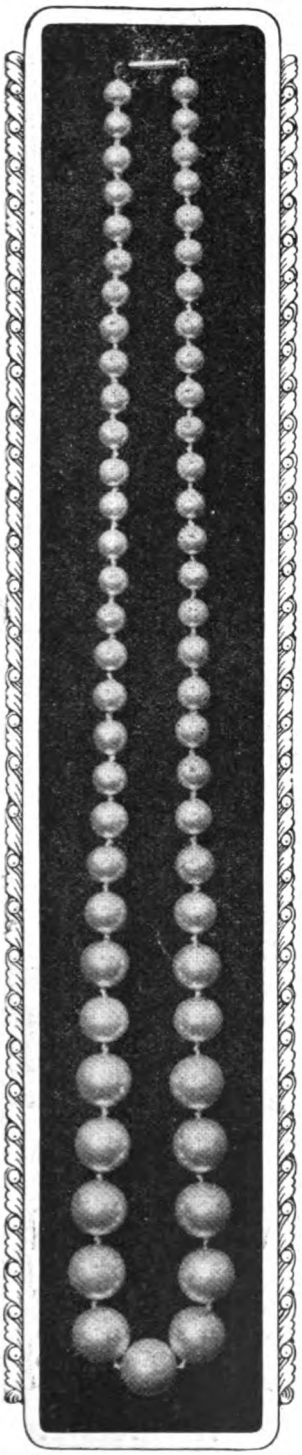

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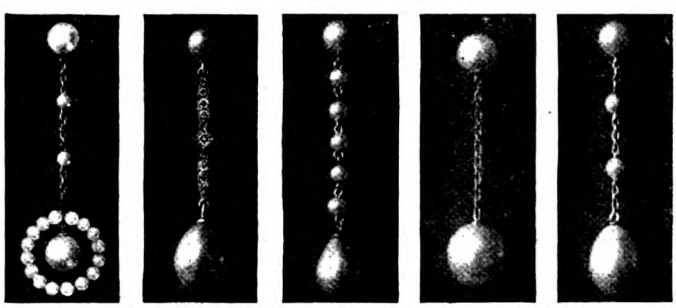

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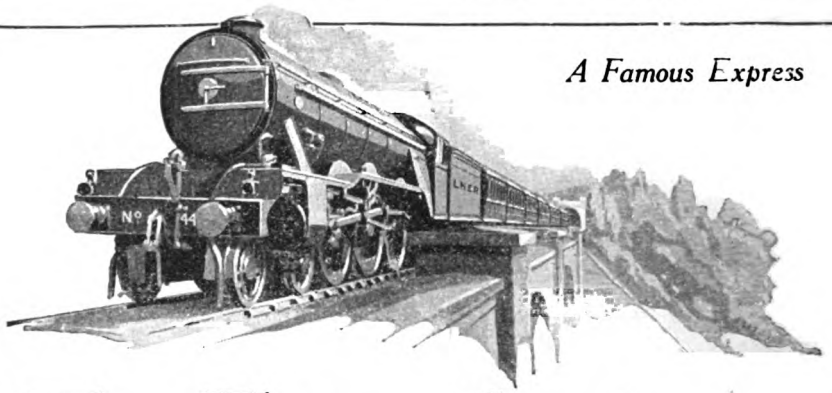

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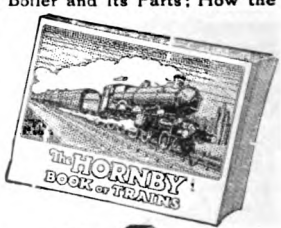

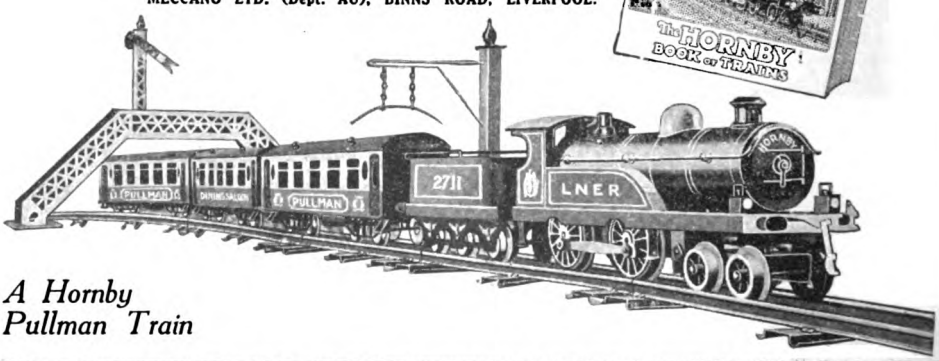

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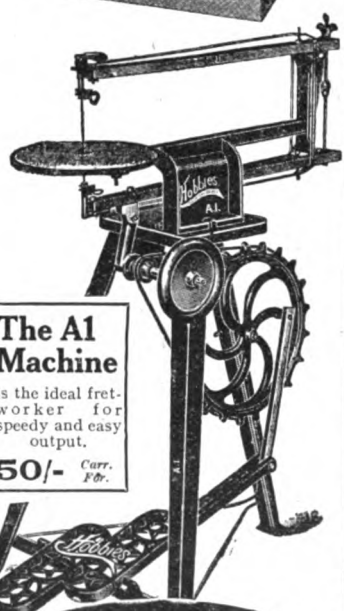

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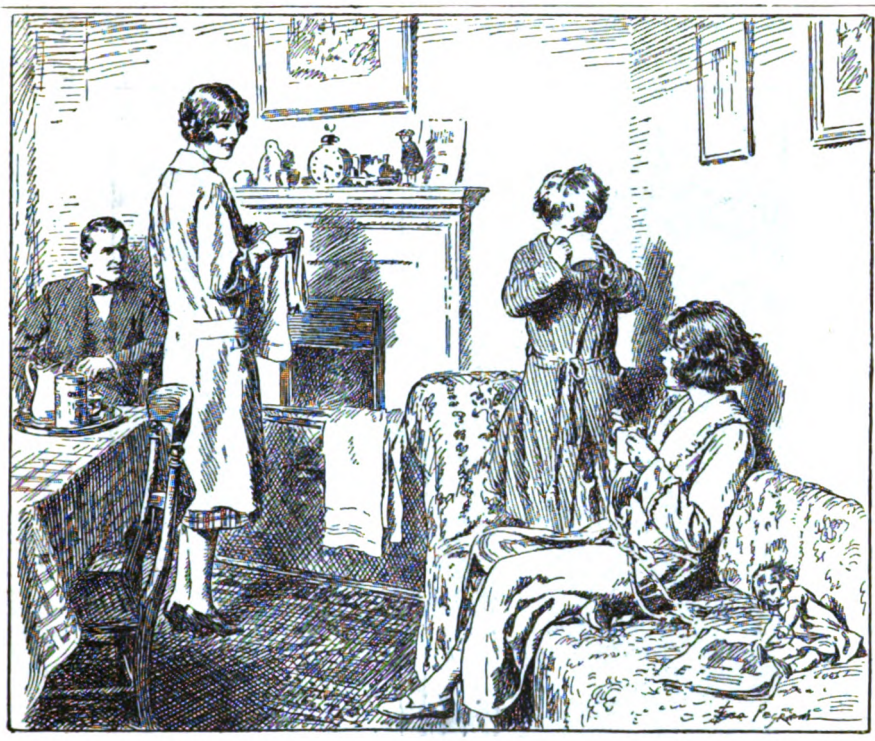
CLARKE, NICKOLLS & COOMBS, LTD.
Victoria Park, London.



"We like bedtime 'cause there's 'Ovaltine"

Bedtime comes all too quickly for children, but even bedtime is welcome when there is delicious "Ovaltine" as their "good-night" beverage.

They have been so busy during the day—at school and at play—using up energy at such a rapid rate. While they sleep Nature re-stocks the little bodies with new energies for the coming day.

But Nature needs material with which to rebuild and restore. Only from nourishment can that restorative material be obtained and only from "Ovaltine" can it be obtained in sufficient quantities for replacing lost energy and for creating reserves of health and strength.

Made from malt, milk, eggs and cocoa "Ovaltine" contains all the nutritive elements correctly balanced and also all the vitamins in correct proportions. It is digested with ease and aids the digestion of several times its own weight of ordinary food.

During the growing years of childhood more nourishment is necessary than ordinary food supplies. That is why "Ovaltine" should not only be the bedtime beverage but also the beverage at every meal.

This delicious beverage builds up sturdy bodies, sound nerves and alert minds. "Ovaltine" children have cheeks which glow with glorious health. They will grow up to vigorous manhood and womanhood.

Sold in tins at 1/6, 2/6 and 4/6.

OVALTINE

TONIC FOOD BEVERAGE

The larger sizes tins are the more economical to purchase.

Builds-up Brain, Nerve and Body

P. 389

The Well Earned Reward

To all women shopping is a serious business—a skilled yet wearying, worrying task. Only women know the physical and mental tension in balancing the family finances.

Here, as in all the stressful times of life, Wincarnis renders invaluable service. In the hour of exhaustion, when the strain seems a little too great and the load a little too heavy, Wincarnis provides both strength and stimulation, buoyancy and animation.

Wincarnis—the natural restorative, the stimulant without reaction. Three vital forces combined in a delicious drink to do you good—the juice of the grape, concentrated extract of beef, and malt. There's health in it, there's strength in it, there's new life in it!

WINCARNIS

"The Wine of Life"

Large size 5/-, Medium size 3/- From Wine Merchants, Licensed Grocers & Chemists.

Send 4d. stamp for FREE sample Bottle (please use 1½d. stamp) to Coleman & Co., Ltd., Dept. 185, Wincarnis Works, Norwich.

W10

BCM/ALLEN

H. SAMUEL
93 SHOPS ABLAZE
WITH XMAS GIFTS
AT FACTORY PRICES!
Principal Branches:
LONDON— [smith
47, King St., Hammer-
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22, Broadway, Stratford
30, North End, Croydon
42, Powis St., Woolwich
13, High St., Islington
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Blackburn: 13, King William St.
Blackpool: 7, Church St.
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Exeter: 211, High St.
Gloucester: 3, Southgate St.
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Ipswich: 5, Tavern St.
Leeds: 39, Briggate
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Lincoln: 231, High St.
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Newcastle-on-Tyne: 2, Grainger St. West
Northampton: 2, Drapery
Nottingham: 31, Long Row
Norwich: 15, The Walk
Oxford: 9, Cornmarket St.
Plymouth: 11, George St.
Portsmouth: 141 & 197, Commercial Rd.
Preston: 17, Fishergate
Reading: 50, Broad St.
Sheffield: 18&43, High St.
Southampton: 155, High [St.
Sunderland: 2, Havelock Buildings
Wolverhampton: 1, Queen St.
Worcester: 27, The Cross
York: 29, Coney St.
WALES—
Cardiff: 7, St. Mary St. and 6, Queen St.
Merthyr: 119, High St.
Newport: 26a, High St. & 172, Commercial St.
Swansea: 265, Oxford St.
SCOTLAND—
Aberdeen: 72, Union St.
Dundee: 1, Reform St.
Edinburgh: 40, North Bridge; 25, Princes St.; 26 & 46, Leith St.
Glasgow: 134 and 136, Argyle St.
Send a postcard for full list.
H. SAMUEL'S 93 SHOPS ARE ABLAZE WITH SPLENDID XMAS GIFT BARGAINS. Placed end to end these shops would stretch over half a mile—one long, enchanting display of beautiful Gifts at the famous FACTORY PRICES that save you pounds! At any of these shops you are buying direct from H. SAMUEL'S OWN IMMENSE FACTORY, whose colossal output enables H. SAMUEL to sell at prices impossible to the ordinary small retailer. Call and see the wonderful display at your nearest Branch!
CALL NOW!
32/6
52/6
28/6
25/-
SOLID GOLD WRIST WATCHES. High-grade jewelled movement. 10 years' warranty. Perfect timekeepers. Many charming designs. From 21/-
A FULL MONTH'S TRIAL any article!
GOLD SLAVE BANGLES Enormous selection of plain and latest fancy designs. From 21/-
32/-
45/-
52/6
82/6
£5/5/-
DIAMOND RINGS. Immense variety of exquisite stones in 18ct. Gold Settings, at amazing low prices.
87/6
SOLID GOLD BRACELET WATCHES. Fine jewelled movements. 10 years' warranty. Accurately timed and adjusted. Hundreds of exquisite designs.
27/6
Sterling Silver Pocket Watch Fully jewelled lever movement. 7 years' warranty. Perfect timekeeper.
27/6
FREE BOOK OF 3,000 XMAS GIFTS
SEND A POSTCARD FOR THIS BIG ILLUSTRATED BOOK of money-saving bargains in Jewellery, Watches, Plate, etc.
IT'S FREE!
H. SAMUEL
The Empire's Largest Jewellers, LTD.
103, 119 & 121, MARKET ST., MANCHESTER.

IT is no mere chance that has kept the name MAZAWATTEE a guarantee of all that "a lovely cup of tea" means. It is because MAZAWATTEE remains now, as always, unexcelled for the three essentials — flavour, fragrance, and economy.

Mazawattee Tea

In sealed packets and decorated tins, of all Grocers.

A box for indoors
and a carton for out-of-doors

For the theatre, for your party and in your drawing room, choose the 1-lb. or 2-lb. box. For out of doors and for the cinema you will like the ¼-lb. carton. Both boxes and cartons contain the chocolates with the same delicious centres.

We suggest "Naples" for Christmas presents, and as they are "Cadbury" Chocolates this is a sure way of wishing your friends "A Happy Christmas." It is a happy thought to include a Naples carton in all your gifts to children.

Cadbury's

¼lb Carton 1/- *Naples Assortment* **1lb box 4/-**

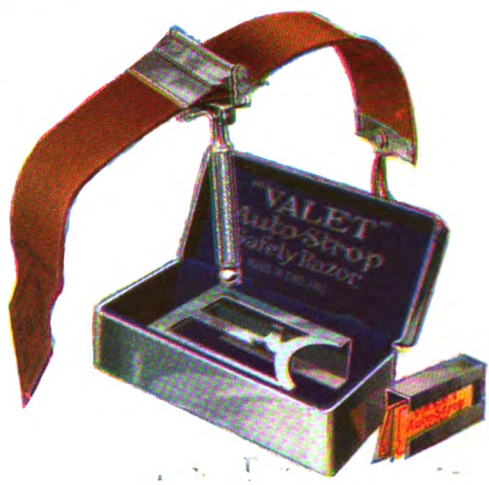
See the name Cadbury on every piece of chocolate

ANY MAN WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO RECEIVE ONE OF THESE.

The "Valet" has qualities that make it a prized possession. It is the only razor that strops its own blade, and it does so in the simplest way. Ten seconds daily on the strop (which slips through the razor's head) ensures that the sixtieth shave is as smooth and velvety as the first. Any dealer will be glad to show you the simple working plan of the "Valet" Razor. There are models to suit all purses, ranging from 2/6 to 45/-

"VALET" Auto Strop Safety Razor

Worthily cased in gleaming nickel, velvet lined.



No. 35 Nickel Set. Contains "Valet" Razor, three blades and strop. In highly polished nickelled case with hinged strop container and nickelled blade sheath. Illustrated above. **7/6**

No. 50 Nickel Set. In highly polished nickelled case with domed lid, contains heavily silvered "Valet" razor, twelve tested "Valet blades, and strop of selected shell horse-hide in hinged container. As illustrated. **21/-**

British made.

AUTOSTROP SAFETY RAZOR CO. LTD., 197/207, City Road, London, E.C.1

Gifts of distinction

AS gifts, Técla Pearls carry a message of perfect taste. Aristocrats in pearl reproduction, they are the envy and admiration of every discriminating woman. Their soft, limpid lustre and delicate orient give them a rare distinction and the cachet of sterling quality.

Recent important experiments—a triumph of scientific laboratory research—have brought Técla Pearls within the reach of almost everyone. A Técla Pearl necklace can be obtained for £3 3s.

Equally desirable gifts are Técla Sapphires, Emeralds, and Rubies, all mounted exclusively with genuine diamonds, in platinum or gold, individual in character and of exquisite design.

We invite an inspection of Técla Gems at our Salon. For the convenience of those unable to call personally, we have opened a Post Order Department.

The Técla illustrated Catalogue will be sent post free on request.

Técla

70 Old Bond Street London W.

PARIS NEW YORK NICE BERLIN

The Ideal Home-Cinema!

"BABY CINÉ"

£5'0'0. Complete

Christmas comes but once a year,
But "Baby Ciné" 's always here—

A welcome guest, putting the finishing touch to your parties ; beloved of young and old alike.

With her, Harold Lloyd, Chaplin, Felix, the Talmadge Sisters, and other film favourites enter your door. Add films of your own making—of yourself, your family, your friends—and your entertainment is unique. Past pleasures become present joys.

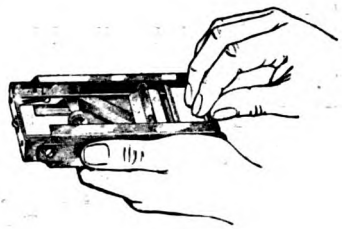
The "Baby Ciné" is as simple to work as a gramophone: and the films, which will not burn, are only 3/6 each ; while many of the 1,000 Photo Dealers stocking "Baby Ciné" will hire or exchange films for a few pence.

Free Demonstrations by all Dealers.

Write for further particulars and name of nearest Agent

Pathé of France Ltd
5, Lisle Street,
London, W.C.2.

Product of Pathé Cinema of Paris.



IF EVERY OWNER OF A SAFETY RAZOR

—no matter whether a Gillette, Auto-Strop or Durham Duplex, used an Allegro, the aggregate amount of money saved would run into *Tens of thousands of Pounds annually.*

Why continue to waste this money, *for every shilling saved* is an important item to almost everyone nowadays.

Can you afford to be without a machine that will do this?

IF YOU HAD AN ALLEGRO

1. You would save pounds in a year.
2. You could put *just that edge* on a blade to suit your own skin and beard.
3. You would, as a result, get *far cleaner and more comfortable shaves.*
4. You would not have to find new hiding places for your old blades as you do now.
5. You would save time. *Three blades can be sharpened* while a new blade is being removed from its messy wrappings.

ASK YOUR DEALER TO-DAY TO GET YOU AN ALLEGRO ON 7 DAYS' FREE TRIAL.

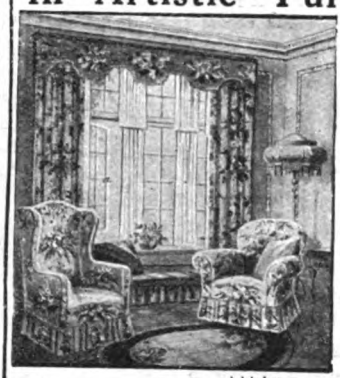
The Price is £1 : 1 : 0
Or 21/9 Post Free.

We shall be glad to supply a machine on these terms :—

ALLEGRO MACHINE CO. (B.E.)
23a, Old Bond Street, London, W.1.

The Home Beautiful

CHARM In Artistic Furnishing



WRITE for our book "THE HOME BEAUTIFUL" *profusely illustrated in colour, giving all details for the arranging and furnishing of the Home. Gratis and Post Free.*

Resist Tropical Sun — "Sunfuf" Unfadable Fabrics — Sea Air and Washing

THE FINEST FURNISHING FABRICS IN THE WORLD.

ALL Fabrics prefixed with the word "Sun" are guaranteed for three years. Any colour failing to meet this guarantee will be replaced.

VELVETS IN CHARMING COLOURS.

"SUN-JUAN" VELVET -	4/11 yd.
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TAPESTRIES & DAMASKS in good designs and colours from 4/8 to 29/11 yd.
SATIN CLOTHS, 4/11 yd. SATIN STRIPE POPLIN, 3/9 yd. REPS, 2/11½ yd. BOLTON SHEETINGS, 2/4½ yd. CASEMENT CLOTHS, 1/2½ yd.

PATTERNS ON APPROVAL.

BARGAIN CHAIR 39/6

UPHOLSTERY

WONDERFUL Collection of Models always on view.
SETTEES from £5 12 6 to £20.
COMFORTABLE CHAIRS from 37/6 to 18 Gns.

THE 'BARGAIN' CHAIR
Good Comfortable Chair, covered in Damask.
39/6
Finest Value Procurable.

DOWN QUILTS

New original Designs. Styles and Colours from— **19/11** to **£10.** Write for Pattern Book and Coloured illustrations.

Williamson & Cole
HIGH STREET, CLAPHAM S.W.4 LTD

TAN-SAD WHEEL TOYS

"THE SPORTS MODEL."
Incorporating our double crank pedal transmission. A very fine car in Orange and Black lined Gold.
65/-
Other models from 21/- to £5 15 0

THE SWIFT 12/6
The most popular all-British scooter. Very strong design. Folds when not in use. Other Models 6/9 to 25/-

THE SPORTY TRICYCLE, from 25/- to 32/6
An exceptionally fine design. Supplied with wheels of varying size.

BICYCLES - - 39/6 & 55/-
Very strong design. 55/- model, as illustrated.

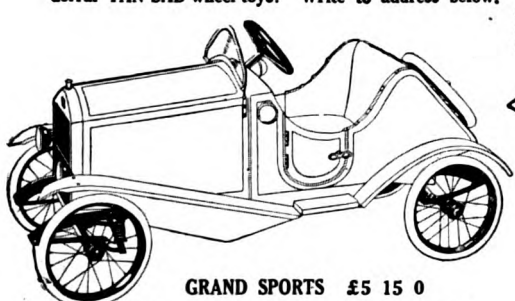
Is your youngster to get a Tan-Sad Motor?

All the Kiddies will be out on Tan-Sad Motors this Christmas. That's the popular sport with little boys to-day. It's what *your* boy, and every other boy, is taking to. Its popularity dates from the introduction of the wonderful range of Tan-Sad British-made Motors. They are real motors in miniature, and the Kiddies recognise the fact. That is why they are the only Motor Cars that Kiddies want this Christmas. See them at the nearest Tan-Sad Dealers.

FREE BOOKLET.—Send postcard to-day for free booklet illustrating the complete range of these wonderful TAN-SAD wheel toys. Write to address below.

This transfer appears on all genuine Tan-Sad Wheel Toys. It is an assurance of reliability and sound British workmanship.

MADE IN TAN-SAD ENGLAND



GRAND SPORTS £5 15 0
A "luxury" model, completely equipped. For details send for copy of booklet.

PULLMAN DOLLS' CARRIAGE MODEL 40 55/-
A wonderful replica of the real Tan-Sad Pullman Baby Carriage. Other models 15/- to 70/-.

℗ WT 11

TAN-SAD Ltd., Maple Works, 1, Albert St., BIRMINGHAM

(47)

Buy a *real* "Otterburn" for your Baby — and *beware* of imitations

A Gift for H.M. The Baby

A soft and Oh-so-cosy Otterburn Rug makes a most acceptable gift for the house where there's a Baby—particulars and prices are given alongside.

If Baby already has an Otterburn, why not send one of the dainty little Otterburn Crib Blankets?

These little Blankets are made in Pale Pink, Pale Blue, Teddy Bear, and Cream, from nought but pure, new Cheviot wool, and have a wide hem of silk in the same shade as the Blanket. They measure 36 x 54 ins. Price - - - **14/-**

All those who sell Otterburn Baby Rugs can supply Otterburn Crib Blankets. If you have any difficulty in obtaining Otterburn Crib Blankets locally, we will supply you direct, post free, provided you enclose the name and address of your usual Retailer, so that we can credit him with the sale.

Every genuine *all-new-wool* "Otterburn" bears the little tab illustrated below. Take no chances with Baby's health and comfort—look for the little tab and say "No," firmly, to all imitations.

Cheaper imitation Rugs, largely made from *re-used wool*, may, when new, look very much like an "Otterburn," but the wash-tub quickly reveals their inferiority.

The "Otterburn" is made from nought but *pure, new wool;* it is *naturally* soft and fleecy and, if washed with ordinary care, actually *improves* with washing.

Every hour of the twenty-four there's a good use for an "Otterburn." Waking or sleeping, your Baby could not have a more faithful guardian 'gainst Baby chills and ills. For the Cot an "Otterburn" makes a cosy coverlet; when Baby "walks out" it does protecting duty as a pram rug; indoors it makes the snuggest nursing wrap. Handy, yet ample in size, the "Otterburn" measures 30 ins. by 36 ins., and is made in Grey, Cream, Sky, Saxe, Rose, Navy, and Biscuit colours. Price - - **13/11**

13/11 Otterburn Rug

Made entirely from Pure, New Wool.

Sold by Drapers, Pram Sellers, etc.

Ask to see Otterburn Baby Rugs, and look for the little Tab (shown alongside). If your Draper is unable to supply, send us his name and address, with your own, enclosing remittance for 13 11, and stating colour needed. We will then supply you, post free, and credit your shopman with the sale.

Otterburn Mill, Ltd., Otterburn Bridge, Northumberland

From Ledger Clerk to Chief Accountant in Twelve Months

TWELVE months after training with The School of Accountancy the man whose record is displayed in this chart was appointed Chief Accountant with an increase in salary of £400.

This is not a special record chosen for display but an average case picked at random from thousands.

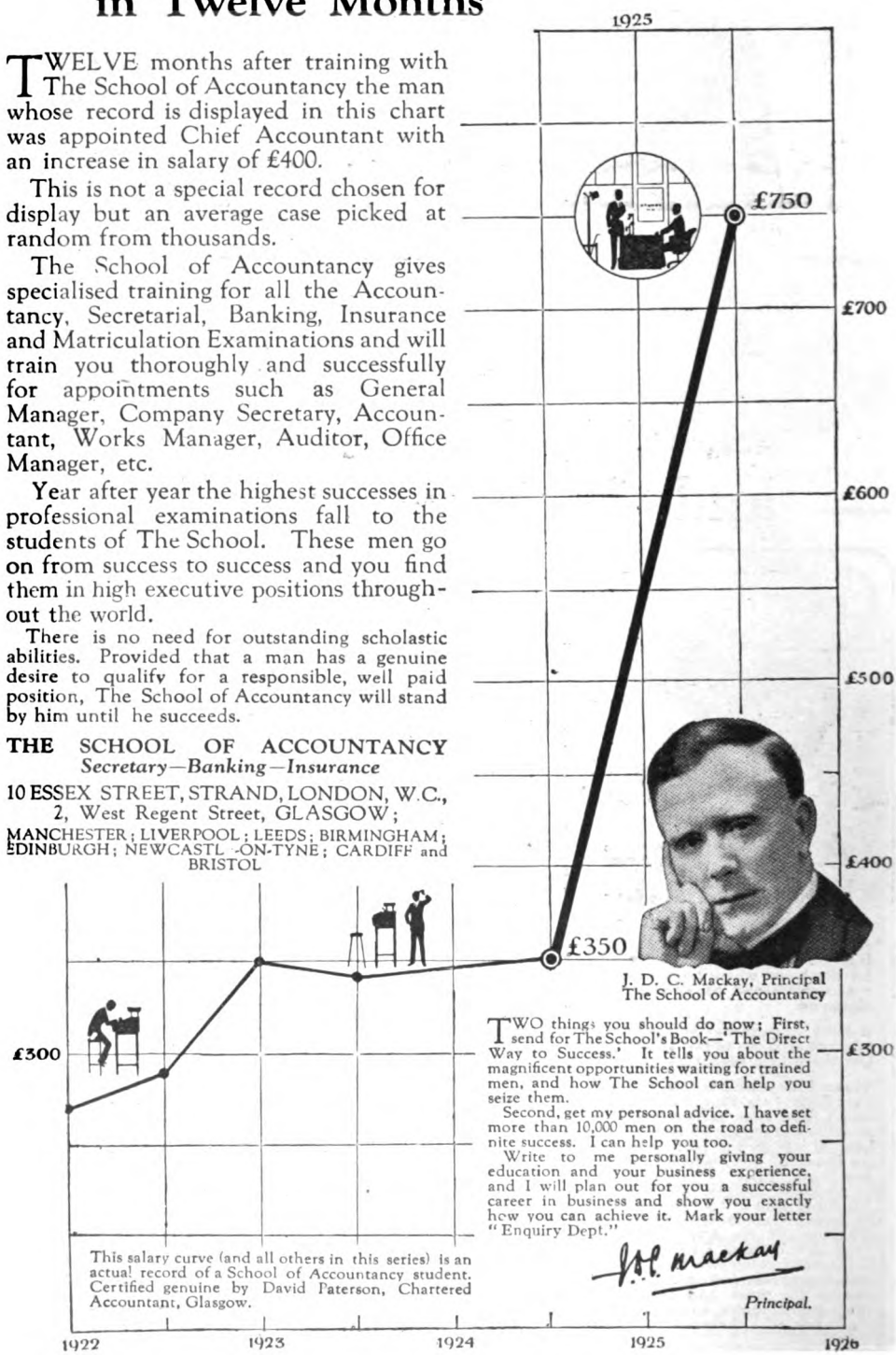
The School of Accountancy gives specialised training for all the Accountancy, Secretarial, Banking, Insurance and Matriculation Examinations and will train you thoroughly and successfully for appointments such as General Manager, Company Secretary, Accountant, Works Manager, Auditor, Office Manager, etc.

Year after year the highest successes in professional examinations fall to the students of The School. These men go on from success to success and you find them in high executive positions throughout the world.

There is no need for outstanding scholastic abilities. Provided that a man has a genuine desire to qualify for a responsible, well paid position, The School of Accountancy will stand by him until he succeeds.

THE SCHOOL OF ACCOUNTANCY
Secretary—Banking—Insurance

10 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.,
2, West Regent Street, GLASGOW;
MANCHESTER; LIVERPOOL; LEEDS; BIRMINGHAM;
EDINBURGH; NEWCASTL.-ON-TYNE; CARDIFF and BRISTOL



This salary curve (and all others in this series) is an actual record of a School of Accountancy student. Certified genuine by David Paterson, Chartered Accountant, Glasgow.

J. D. C. Mackay, Principal
The School of Accountancy

TWO things you should do now; First, send for The School's Book—'The Direct Way to Success.' It tells you about the magnificent opportunities waiting for trained men, and how The School can help you seize them.

Second, get my personal advice. I have set more than 10,000 men on the road to definite success. I can help you too.

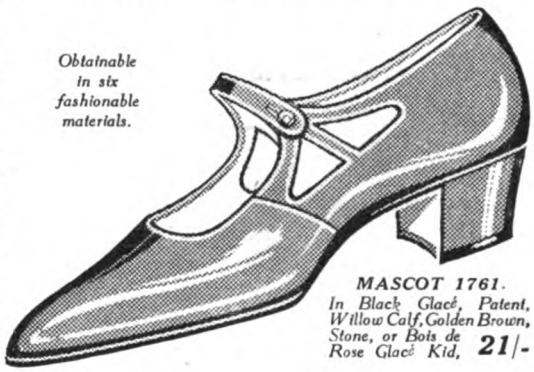
Write to me personally giving your education and your business experience, and I will plan out for you a successful career in business and show you exactly how you can achieve it. Mark your letter "Enquiry Dept."

J. D. C. Mackay
Principal.

The popular low-heel MASCOT

THE MASCOT Low Heel Shoe illustrated here, which, in a night, so to speak, has become so fashionable, is an exceptionally comfortable shoe. Perhaps its comfort appealed so much because it was seen to be smart and stylish as well. Anyhow, it's the most popular 21/- MASCOT style in the shops to-day, and can be had in a range of delightful colours. Ask your local Agent to show it to you.

Obtainable in six fashionable materials.



MASCOT 1761.
In Black Glacé, Patent, Willow Calf, Golden Brown, Stone, or Bois de Rose Glacé Kid, **21/-**

NORVIC MASCOT

Write for nearest shop selling this and other new MASCOT Styles

NORVIC SHOE COMPANY, NORWICH

for 14/- down a 6ft RILEY Home Billiard Table delivered in your home

Riley's "Home" Billiard Table shown resting on ordinary Dining Table.

Send for price list

—a real billiard table built like a full-size Table—not a toy. The carriage is paid—and all risk in transit taken by Riley's.

7 days free trial

enables you to examine and test the table before buying. This is all you have to do. Simply send a postal order for 14/- and the popular size 6 ft. Riley "Home" Billiard Table (to rest firmly and conveniently on your dining-table) will be delivered to your door. The table is complete with accessories and ready for play. The balance of the money you pay monthly as you play. These are the various sizes of Riley's "Home" Tables, together with cash & easy purchase prices:

4 ft. 4 in. × 2 ft. 4 in.	£7 0 0	*or in*	8 6
5 ft. 4 in. × 2 ft. 10 in.	£9 0 0	18	11/-
6 ft. 4 in. × 3 ft. 4 in.	£11 15 0	*monthly*	14/-
7 ft. 4 in. × 3 ft. 10 in.	£15 0 0	*payments*	18 -
8 ft. 4 in. × 4 ft. 4 in.	£21 10 0	*of*	26 -

Riley's "Combine" Billiard and Dining Table is a beautiful and highly finished piece of furniture which can be converted from a billiard table into a dining table in a few seconds. Supplied in Oak or Mahogany, any shade, and in various designs. These prices are for Mahogany Round Leg Design.

5 ft. 4 in. × 2 ft. 10 in.	£22 10 0	*or in*
6 ft. 4 in. × 3 ft. 4 in.	£26 10 0	13 *or* 20
7 ft. 4 in. × 3 ft. 10 in.	£33 0 0	*monthly*
8 ft. 4 in. × 4 ft. 4 in.	£43 0 0	*payments.*

Riley's are the largest makers of full-size Billiard Tables in Great Britain. Write for prices and details. Estimates for repairs and accessories sent free.

RILEY'S BILLIARD "COMBINE" AND DINING TABLES

This is the "Cabriole" Billiard and Dining Table. Cash price £34 : 10 : 0, or in 13 or 20 monthly payments.

E. J. RILEY LTD.

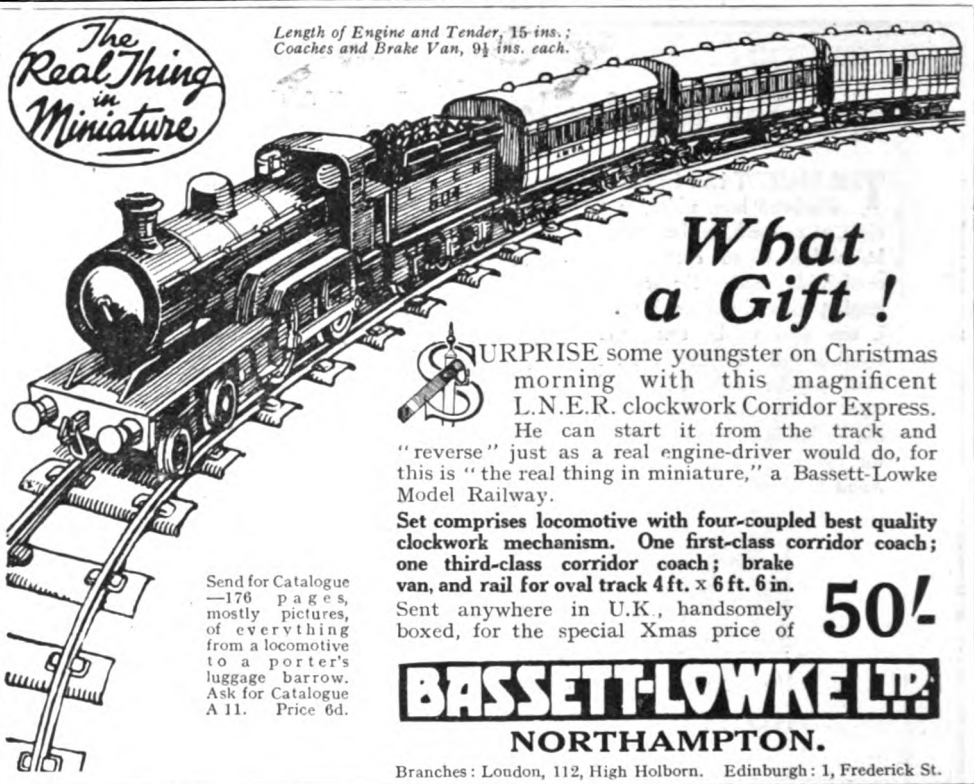
PALM WORKS, ACCRINGTON.

And (Dept. C), 147, Aldersgate St., London, E.C.1

Ф11

The Real Thing in Miniature

Length of Engine and Tender, 15 ins.; Coaches and Brake Van, 9½ ins. each.



What a Gift!

SURPRISE some youngster on Christmas morning with this magnificent L.N.E.R. clockwork Corridor Express. He can start it from the track and "reverse" just as a real engine-driver would do, for this is "the real thing in miniature," a Bassett-Lowke Model Railway.

Set comprises locomotive with four-coupled best quality clockwork mechanism. One first-class corridor coach; one third-class corridor coach; brake van, and rail for oval track 4 ft. x 6 ft. 6 in.

Sent anywhere in U.K., handsomely boxed, for the special Xmas price of **50/-**

Send for Catalogue —176 pages, mostly pictures, of everything from a locomotive to a porter's luggage barrow. Ask for Catalogue A 11. Price 6d.

BASSETT-LOWKE LTD.

NORTHAMPTON.

Branches: London, 112, High Holborn. Edinburgh: 1, Frederick St.

IF WINTER COMES——ENJOY IT!

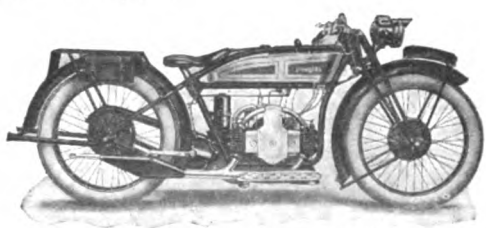
BY RIDING A

Douglas

MOTOR CYCLE

When the roads are slimy and a howling north-easter is blowing, and treacherous tramlines lie in wait to bring you off, THEN is the time you have cause to bless the day you chose a DOUGLAS. You purr along with absolute safety, the fat balloon tyres giving a perfect grip on any surface and laughing at tramlines. The perfectly designed machine, with its low centre of gravity and vibrationless engine, gives absolute freedom from skidding. And when the "other fool" cuts out of a side turning in front of you your super-efficient DOUGLAS brakes will save you every time. Whilst other motor-cyclists either ride in deadly fear of skidding or dock their bikes altogether, the happy DOUGLAS rider laughs at them all and rides as much as ever—and enjoys it!

Motor Cycle Manufacturers By Appointment to H.M. The King.



Still Leader of the Pack.

The 1927 Standard 350 c.c. E.W. Model

£42 : 10s.

Lamp, Generator & Horn, 30/- extra.

DOUGLAS MOTORS, LTD., KINGSWOOD, BRISTOL

2/2

2-oz. Tin

The illustration is approximately half life-size. All three strengths of Barneys are now being issued in this 'Ever-fresh' packing.

3

Strengths

Barneys (medium)
Punchbowle (full strength)
Parsons Pleasure (mild)

The 'Ever-fresh' Tin is exclusive in the Tobacco Trade to Tobaccos made by John Sinclair, Ltd.

Factory Freshness always and everywhere

You see that little rubber tab? Just pull it. As you pull, a virtual vacuum is released and the outside air rushes, *hisses*, in. Not until you do this can the tin be opened.

When this 'Ever-fresh' Tin is sealed in the Barneys packing rooms, it imprisons factory-freshness which is maintained, for months or even years, *wherever in the World the Tin may go*, until the vacuum seal is broken by pulling out the tab.

From now on, whenever and wherever you buy Barneys in its 'Ever-fresh' tin, you will encounter the same perfection of condition which prevails in the blending rooms of the Barneys Factory: the pristine freshness and fragrance of the actual blending are always and unalteringly awaiting you whether you buy Barneys in Singapore or Sheffield, Samoa or South Shields.

The goodness of Barneys has taken it across the World. In a few short years, Barneys has grown from an Edinburgh local sale to Empire-wide fame . . . . on goodness, *inherent and continued goodness.*

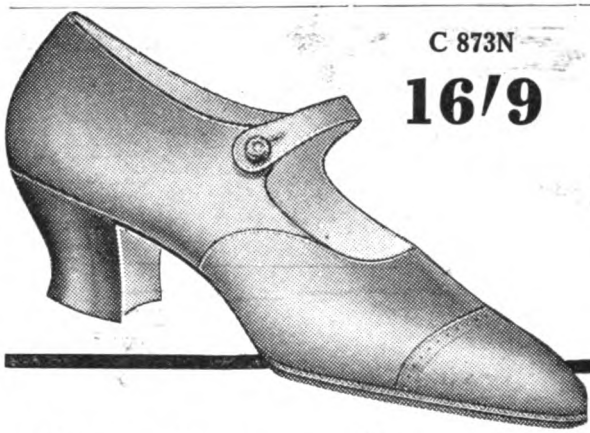
Barneys goodness is our pride and ceaseless care. We could not, *cannot*, make Barneys better, but we now pack it in an improved tin . . . . to ensure perfection of condition, in every clime, through all the Seasons.

The Barneys 'Ever-fresh' Tin is sealed *and kept sealed* by atmospheric pressure from without. No outer air can get inside the tin before *someone pulls the tab and lets it in.* And until this comes about, chummy honest Barneys from the North Country, in all its fragrant freshness, awaits the pleasure of your pipe and smoking. All 3 strengths in the new packing at 2/2 the 2-oz. Tin.

Fresh from the Factory — wherever you buy Barneys!

John Sinclair, Ltd., Tobacco Manufacturers, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Eng. Also at Edinburgh.

(T.1.) London Offices:—24, Holborn, E.C.1.



C 873N

16/9

This Tan Willow Calf one-bar shoe is altogether a most reliable model, equally popular for smart appearance and excellent wearing qualities. It has a 1⅝ in. shaped heel, and is obtainable in sizes and half-sizes from 3 to 7, **16/9**

Comfort—Appearance—Wear!

In fifty years of the footwear business we have never known a brand attain such popularity as the "Burlington." Anyone who wears them will tell you why—it is because "Burlingtons" represent the finest footwear value to be obtained anywhere.

ORDER BY POST
Simply state shoe number and size and send pencil outline of your foot with remittance. (Foreign orders must include enough for postage.) We send goods post free in U.K. *and guarantee to satisfy you.* Send postcard for F.H.W. Catalogue, which shows scores of styles.

500 SHOPS FREEMAN, HARDY & WILLIS, Ltd., 98, Rutland Street, Leicester 500 SHOPS

GIFTS which are always RIGHT

The **MORNY "WEEK-END" COFFRET** containing miniatures of 7 Morny Toilet Luxuries. A most delightful and popular gift. Perfumed "Chaminade" or "June Roses." *As illustrated,* **5/-** *Postage 6d. extra.*

The **FAMOUS MORNY PERFUMES** in bijou-gold lettered bottles (*as illustrated*). "Chaminade" or "Mystérieuse," **6/6**; "June Roses," **5/6**; "Nuit de Carnaval," **7/-**; "Fantaisie" or "Sérénade," **6/-**. *Postage 6d. extra.*

Every woman loves perfumed gifts for her personal use.

Choose your gifts from the beautifully illustrated Booklet of 50 Gifts from Morny, priced from **2/-** to **3 Gns.** This Booklet is post free on request.

· MORNY ·

Originator of Fine Perfume Products.

201 REGENT STREET LONDON W.1

All the Morny Fine Perfume Products are obtainable from the leading Retailers of Perfumery throughout the British Isles.

...but the Bracelet must be a "Britannic"!

Nothing else is good enough to preserve the beauty of the watch from damage or loss.

The "BRITANNIC"

The Queen of Watch Bracelets

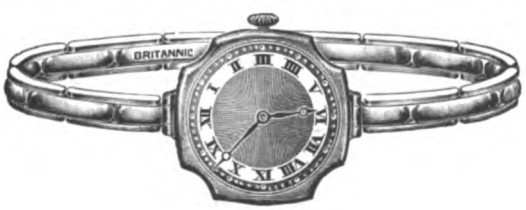
is guaranteed for five years during which the springs will be renewed should the need arise, free of charge, through any jeweller.

THE "BRITANNIC" is on sale at all good-class jewellers in various widths.

Complete with watches in various styles from 4 guineas, or "BRITANNIC" EXPANDING BRACELETS alone with hooks to replace straps.

If your jeweller does not stock them, please send a postcard addressed BCM/Britannic, 55, London, for nearest jeweller.

See the name "BRITANNIC" is engraved inside the bracelet and avoid inferior imitations.



A packet of

Wills's

GOLD FLAKE

CIGARETTES

A request that is a habit
of all discriminating smokers

10 for 6d
20 for 1/-

Thanks!

WITH · OR · WITHOUT · CORK · TIPS

by Appointment to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

Here's a Gift he will use every day

WIN a man's heartiest appreciation by selecting a gift that will minister daily to his comfort and well-groomed appearance. Choose a Gillette outfit fitted with the New Improved Gillette Safety Razor. Admittedly the most perfect shaving instrument man's ingenuity has yet devised; the Gillette Safety Razor turns what is ordinarily an ordeal into a mere toilet incident.

See the full range of handsome New Improved Gillette outfits to-day—any Gillette dealer will help you to select your gift. Prices from **21/-** upwards.

THE NEW STANDARD

in genuine leather case purple velvet and satin-lined. Comprises New Improved Gillette Safety Razor: 20 shaving edges (10 double edge Gillette Blades) in metal box **21/-**

With Gold plated Razor and Blade box ... **25/-**

GILLETTE BLADES. In packets of 10 (20 shaving edges), **4/6.** In packets of 5 (10 shaving edges), **2/3.** Sold by Stores, Cutlers, Ironmongers, Chemists, Hairdressers and Jewellers.

WRITE FOR ILLUSTRATED BOOKLET.

GILLETTE SAFETY RAZOR, LTD.,
184/188, Gt. Portland Street, London, W.1.

Gillette Safety Razor

TRADE Gillette MARK KNOWN THE WORLD OVER

NO STROPPING NO HONING

The Ideal Xmas Gift for Men

PICTURES IN THE GAS FIRE

5

The Good Genie

"To-night, Dicky, you shall have the story of the Good Genie of Gas. Where he enters, homes are made happier. He helps rich and poor alike. He makes cooking easier and housework lighter. When a fire is wanted, you summon the Good Genie by turning the magic tap. In a moment the fire is glowing brightly.

"And then when it's time for little boys to go to bed, see, you can send the Good Genie away. I'll turn the tap. There, he's going already. Watch him, Dicky—pop! he's gone. Now we'll go upstairs and turn on the magic tap in the nursery, and bring the Good Genie in to watch you go to bed."

The B.C.G.A., representing the British Gas Industry, is at the service of the public, without charge, for advice and help on all gas matters. A letter to the Secretary of this Association will receive prompt and careful attention.

THE BRITISH COMMERCIAL GAS ASSOCIATION

28 GROSVENOR GARDENS, LONDON, S.W.1

Ideal Presents
WINSONIA PORCELAIN

as a Christmas Present makes an Ideal Gift, it is beautiful as well as useful. There is a varied selection of Bowls, Trinket Sets, Dinner, Tea and Coffee Sets, etc., to choose from. We can dispatch your order together with our replacement Guarantee to any address. If you are not completely satisfied your money will be refunded in full.

Indian Bird Decoration, illustrated on best Semi-Porcelain. Tea Set 21 piece, **18/4.** Tea Set 40 piece, **31/9.** Dinner Service 54 piece, **50/6.**

No. 2012. Decoration illustrated below. Hand Enamelled on Transparent China. Tea Set 21 piece, **31/6.** Tea Set 40 piece, **52/-.**

CARRIAGE PAID IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Write for Free Art Catalogue. Two Sample Plates post free 1/6.

THE WINDSOR PORCELAIN CO. (Dept. S), Phœnix Works, HANLEY, STAFFS.

No matter how much you may lecture; youthful impatience *will* evade, if possible, the irksome business of drying. It is much better to have Osman Towels, which dry so gently, so quickly, and with so little effort that, wonder upon wonder, a necessary duty is turned almost into a pleasure.

OSMAN Towels

See the small red "OSMAN" tab on each.

If you like Osman Towels, ask your Draper for Osman Sheets and Pillowcases.

Made by BARLOW & JONES LTD., Bolton and Manchester.

℗ 50

Welcome Home!

OUTSIDE it is dull and bleak and cold, but inside all is welcoming warmth and colour when the home is furnished with Durobelle fabrics.

Soft, cosy textures, rich, warm colours; fabrics for every furnishing purpose . . . And their beauty is ***permanent***, for the life and colour of these fabrics ***cannot fade***, no matter to what exposure and washing and wear and tear you subject them.

Curtains and Coverings, Cushions, too . . . If you want your home to be cosy, welcoming, colourful throughout the winter, *all* must be Durobelle.

Send to-day for Season-able Range of Patterns

ALLEN'S FADELESS Durobelle

ANY LENGTH REPLACED FREE IF COLOUR FADES.

Plain Casement Cloths, 31 ins. wide, Creams from **1/0½** per yard, colours from **1/6½** per yard. 50 ins. wide, Cream and colours from **1/9½** per yard.

Fine Silky Casement Cloths, 50 ins. wide. Creams and colours, from **2/3½** to **3/3½** per yard.

Bolton Sheeting. 15 beautiful colours. 50 ins. wide, **2/11½** to **4/3½** per yard.

Cotton Satins and Damasks, plain and in charming designs. Beautiful colours. 50 ins. wide, from **3/11½** to **10/9** per yard.

Fine Soft Reps, 31 and 50 ins. wide. Cream and colours, from **1/6½** to **2/11½** per yard.

Satin Stripe Reversible Casements, in great variety of colours. 48 ins. wide, **3/11½** per yard.

Chenilles and Velours, rich soft draperies, many lovely colours. 50 ins. wide, from **5/11** to **16/9** per yard.

Art. Silk Taffetas and Damasks, plain, shot, striped and patterned effects. Wide range of exquisite rich colourings, all 50 ins. wide, prices from **6/6** to **16/6** per yard.

Ask also for "My Lady's Home." Allen's lovely colour book of beautiful furnishings.

J. J. Allen

(Dept. A.) BOURNEMOUTH

LONDON - - 32, Sloane Street, S.W.

All Letters to BOURNEMOUTH.

FOR WINTER SPORTS,
Fox's Puttees are the ideal legwear. Non-fray edges, spiral fit, hard-wearing, all-woollen material in a wide variety of colours. Men's from 10/- to 20/-. Ladies' from 9/6 to 16/-; with or without spats. Full particulars and shade card on application.
Waterproof purse to hold one pair, fitted with "lightning" fastener 7/6, or with buttons 5/-

FOX BROS. & CO. LTD. Dept. F.
Wellington, Somerset.

Agents for U.S.A.—The Manley-Johnson Corporation, 260, West Broadway, New York.

FOX'S
F.I.P.
PUTTEES

S.K —M.

Wool is Best!

Winter's worst leaves the wearer of "PESCO" snug and secure, for the Pure Wool textures of this famous underwear frustrate the onslaughts of damp and chill as can no other material.

In "PESCO," too, the requirements of vigorous youth and active manhood are fully satisfied; maximum protection and comfort being afforded without sacrificing that perfect freedom of movement so essential to the energetic.

Ask for "Pesco"—Scotch and Best

Pesco
TRADE MARK
UNSHRINKABLE PESCO FINISH

"Pesco" is obtainable from all Drapers and Hosiers in every fashionable underwear shape in Pure Wool (or Silk and Wool) for Ladies, Gentlemen, or Children; also in Hosiery and Sports Wear. For Infants and Young Children "Pesco" Baby Wear is recommended. Every garment guaranteed unshrinkable. In case of difficulty write for names of nearest agents.

PETER SCOTT & CO., LTD. (Dept. 5)
HAWICK, SCOTLAND.

K

BRITISH BEAUTY
Beauty comes and Beauty stays
by using Pond's two creams.
In jars 1/3 and 2/6. In tubes 7½d and 1/-
Cold Cream only, extra large jars 5/-, extra large tubes 2/6.
"To Soothe and Smooth your Skin"
Pond's Extract Co. 103 St John Street, London E.C.1.
POND'S
VANISHING CREAM
POND'S
COLD CREAM
Pond's
Vanishing & Cold
Creams

PLAYER'S MEDIUM NAVY CUT CIGARETTES WITH OR WITHOUT CORK TIPS

Christmas

"PLAYER'S ALWAYS PLEASE"

A Casket of Happy Memories

It's the Tobacco that counts

PLAYER'S NAVY CUT.

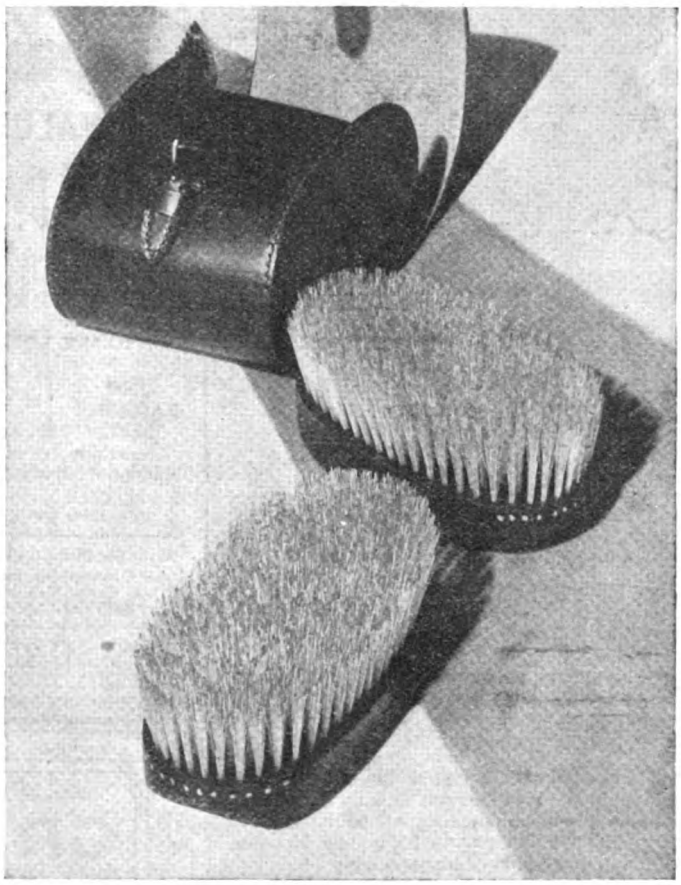
REGD. No. 154011

This casket contains
100 plain and 50 cork tipped
PLAYER'S *Medium* NAVY CUT CIGARETTES

150 CIGARETTES FOR 7/6D.

THE ABOVE ARE ALSO PACKED IN 10'S, 20'S, 50'S AND 100'S.

BETTER VALUE THAN EVER



Military Brush Case containing pair of Ebony Military Brushes, (pure bristles) and comb. **42/-** *Post free.*

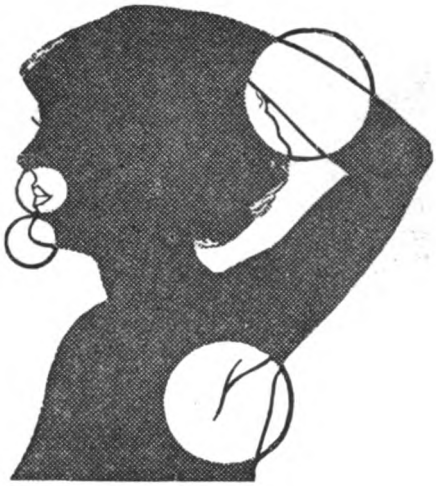
A full range of Ebony & Satinwood Military Brushes always in stock. Prices from **10/6**

BUY your Christmas Gifts from Boots. In the Gift Departments excellent quality and infinite variety facilitate the choice of everything you need for this season of remembrance. Moderate prices enable you to effect a considerable saving this year. ***Write for Catalogue!***

Boots Gift Departments

Chief London Branch: 182 REGENT STREET, W.1.
Chief Northern Branch: ROYAL EXCHANGE, MANCHESTER.

BOOTS PURE DRUG CO. LTD.



HAIR REMOVED FOR EVER
—FROM THESE SPOTS
NEW SAFE WAY!

OBJECTIONABLE hair on face, neck, arms, under-arms or legs can now be removed—roots as well—in an amazing scientific way that finally destroys the growth for good. No electricity, no bad smells or unbearable pain. This new method, perfected by the Dermal Research Institute, is an entirely new discovery—extraordinary—yet absolutely safe and harmless. It does not merely remove hair temporarily, but gets at the real ***cause*** of hair growth, gently easing away the ***very roots,*** so that they will never grow again. The whole process is quick and simple—as easily applied as cold cream. Simply apply a soothing balsam—and the hairs lift out in a minute—leaving the skin adorably smooth and clear.

FREE BOOKLET EXPLAINS.

FREE Booklet describes this remarkable new method and tells how it will quickly, easily and inexpensively rid you of superfluous hair for ever. Fill in and post the coupon to-day for your copy. There is no obligation.

DERMAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (Dept. D10512), 3, LOWER JOHN STREET, LONDON, W.1.

Dermal Research Institute (Dept. D10512), 3, Lower John Street, London, W.1.

You may send me, free and without obligation, your interesting little book, "The New Way to Remove Superfluous Hair Permanently."

Name.....

Address.....

Town..... 14

The **Treasure Crib**

Wonder Model.

BEST VALUE IN THE KINGDOM

Sliding side, safety catch, wire mattress. Can be polished to match any furniture.

PRICES: 4ft. 6ins. by 2ft. 6ins. **67/6.** 4ft. by 2ft. **58/6** plain wood.

NEW MATERNITY DEPT.

Everything needed, dainty gowns from **45/-**.

With Picture Panels (as illus.), 5/- extra.

Children's Clothes to 6 years. Agents for Harringtons Squares. All goods sent carriage paid on 7 days' appro.

Write for FREE CATALOGUES, sent in *plain* envelope.
***A.*—"Everything for Mother and Baby," 160 pp. (Cots, Cribs, Babies' and Children's Clothing, etc.).**
***B.*—Baby Carriages. *M.*—Maternity (Gowns from 45/-).**

TREASURE COT CO., Ltd.
(Dept. U.1), 103, Oxford Street, London, W.1.
Nearly opp. Bourne & Hollingsworth.

Welcome Always Keep it handy

GRANT'S
MORELLA
CHERRY BRANDY

The Liqueur which gives a zest to life.

put up in Bottles, — Half-bottles and Miniatures. Ask your Wine Merchant for it, and at Hotels restaurants etc. "Sportsmans" (Dry) "Queens" (Sweet.)

(miniatures) BABY GRANT'S for every pocket

MAIDSTONE, ENG.

FREE
10 Day Tube
Mail Coupon

Teeth Made White
—Glorious, Gleaming

Your gums like coral to contrast them—just remove that dingy film; see what happens.

Please accept 10-day tube to try

MODERN dental science now has found a way that restores "off-colour" teeth to clearness, that gives toneless gums a healthy coral tint.

Leading dentists urge it widely. For it protects the teeth and firms tender gums.

It is called Pepsodent—a new-type tooth paste that works by removing the dingy film coat from teeth that old-time dentifrices did not clear off successfully. That's why brushing fails you.

Run your tongue across your teeth and you'll feel that film. A slippery coating that absorbs discolorations and keeps your teeth off colour, that invites tooth and gum troubles.

Remove it and you will be amazed at what you see. Discard old ways now. Get Pepsodent from your chemist. Or send coupon for 10-day tube to try.

FREE Mail this for 10-day Tube to **Pepsodent** 2069

The New-Day Quality Dentifrice

THE PEPSODENT COMPANY, (Dept. 131) 42, Southwark Bridge Road, London, S.E.1.

Send to—

Name.....

Address.....

Give full address. Write plainly.
Only one tube to a family.

STRAND MAG./Dec., 1926.

Ventilates as it warms!

ALL Radiation Gas Grates have two openings in the canopy.

The lower or "Injector" opening carries away the entire combustion products, and the upper or "Ventilating" opening carries away the used air from the room, which is continually replaced by fresh air.

The room, therefore, never becomes dry or stuffy, as the Radiation patent "Injector-Ventilator" maintains a constant circulatory system of ventilation. Furthermore, there is *ventilation without draughts*.

See these "Injector-Ventilator" Gas Grates at your local Gas Showrooms.

Made only by the largest Gas Appliance Manufacturers in the world—

ARDEN HILL & CO., 19, Queen Victoria Street, E.C.4.

THE DAVIS GAS STOVE CO., LTD., 60, Oxford Street, W.1.

FLETCHER, RUSSELL & CO., LTD., 4, Berners Street, W.1.

THE RICHMOND GAS STOVE AND METER CO., LTD., 164, Queen Victoria Street, E.C.4.

WILSONS & MATHIESONS, LTD., 76, Queen Street, E.C.4.

JOHN WRIGHT & CO., 21, Queen Victoria Street, E.C.4.

Radiation
'INJECTOR VENTILATOR'
GAS GRATES

THE ORIGINAL
Challenge
Patent Rustless Roller-Bearing
CURTAIN RUNNER

Many delighted users of the "Challenge" have written appreciative letters of this simple, efficient and inexpensive Runner which makes light or heavy curtains "glide at a touch." It consists of a flat rustless brass rail, easily bent to any shape of window, on which run large-size roller-bearing runners carrying the Curtains. Cannot collect dust, and you can fit it yourself.

"Challenge" Curtain Tape (shown above) obviates stitching.

Booklet S, listing Curtain Runners from 1/- per foot complete, sent free.

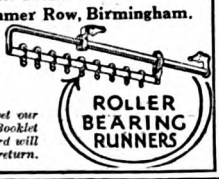
"Challenge" Patent Stair Carpet Clips. Neat and safe. Fixed with one screw, and it is only necessary to raise the movable arm to release carpet. No cleaning required. Write for Booklet S.

"Challenge" Patent Extending Wardrobe Rail. Provides more room in the wardrobe. Garments hang on roller-bearing runners. Rail extended at a touch. Write for Booklet S.

CHALLCO Ltd. (Dept. S), Summer Row, Birmingham.

REFUSE SUBSTITUTES— insist on the "Challenge."

Be sure you get our interesting Booklet S. A Postcard will bring it by return.



An Ideal Xmas Present.

THE S.M.B.
TAKE-ABOUT BED-TABLE

A valuable gift for invalid friends. Can be packed in a trunk. Tray, Linen, Tray Cloth and Chinaware to suit Table. Everything complete, dainty and inviting. The ideal table on which to serve a delicate meal.

It will be received with full appreciation and delight, for such a present carries a thought of goodwill and cheer very intimately to a friend in sick bed.

Special washable Ivorine nameplates, as illustrations, at 6d. each extra, can be attached to the tray, thus affording a neat finish to the complete gift. Order at once.

FROM THE FAMILY
TO MOTHER
XMAS 1926

Gift to the Royal Hospital by

All British make 24" x 13".

Prices range from £1 : 18 : 6 to £6 : 6 : 0.

Write direct for illustrated Lists and Particulars, or let us send you list of Stores stocking our goods.

NORTHERN MANUFACTURING CO., 48, WEST PRINCES STREET, GLASGOW, C.4

The Gift that pleases most

NEW
CASH PRICE
(A reduction of 6/6)

78/6

or £4 : 2 : 6 :

10/- with order and balance 10/- monthly.

DELIVERED FREE
in England and Wales

The Berkeley Easy Chair is luxuriously upholstered with long coppered-steel springs in seat, back, and front edge Best Birch frame. Supreme comfort and durability.

GUARANTEE

We deliver immediately on receipt of deposit with order, and if the value of the Berkeley does not come up to expectations, you may return it at OUR EXPENSE and we will refund your money in full.

LOOSE COVERS

When you choose your Berkeley select your Loose Cover at the same time. The small extra cost is a good investment. We have a wonderful range of delightful Cretonnes. From **16/6**

SEND FOR PATTERNS—
Post Free.

Choose Wisely this Christmas

THE more you study the problem of Xmas Gifts the more clearly stands out the superiority of the Berkeley. Here is a Real Gift, something substantial, something worthy of your very best friend, a gift which lasts for years and years—a handsome gift.

And it costs so little compared to the lasting comfort, pleasure and solid satisfaction it affords. For Value it is absolutely unrivalled. The recent reduction in price, accompanied by a great improvement in quality due to the most advanced methods of manufacture, places Berkeley Upholstery in a supreme position. For the first time

FIBRE AND HAIR STUFFING

of guaranteed quality is being used throughout, and a magnificent new range of

DAMASKS and TAPESTRIES

is provided, giving customers a wide choice of coverings to harmonise with any scheme of decoration.

The **Berkeley**

IS THE IDEAL XMAS GIFT

Owing to the extraordinary demand, write immediately for Patterns—Free.

H. J. SEARLE & SON, (1926) LTD.
(Dept. S.M.) 70-78, OLD KENT RD., LONDON, S.E.1.
Branch Showrooms : 133, Victoria St., Westminster, S.W.1; The Arcade, High St., Croydon; and 16, The Parade, Watford.

THE BURBERRY

A Christmas Gift that is Useful the Whole Year Round

Day in and day out throughout the year, there's hardly a day that isn't a "Burberry" day—an occasion when The Burberry is needed either as a protection against rain and wind, or as an airy-light, self-ventilating Overcoat.

Write, mentioning "The Strand," for a copy of
THE BURBERRY BOOK
illustrating the ubiquitous uses of The Burberry; its efficiency as a WEATHERPROOF and its great value as an OVERCOAT, together with 27 patterns of materials, and prices of Men's and Women's models.

BURBERRYS *Ltd.* **HAYMARKET LONDON S.W.1**

BARGAINS FOR LADIES

From GREENLEES & SONS of LEICESTER

IDEAL XMAS GIFTS

Design 13A84. Ladies' Flowered Brocade (Rainbow Effect) Dress Shoe. Smart Toe. Covered Shaped Heel. A charming little model which will harmonise with all the newest in Evening Wear.

Price per Pair **9/11**

Also stocked in Shaded Tinsel and Gold Tinsel. Same Price.

"Easiephit" SHOEWEAR

represents the highest value for money. You get it from Leicester makers at Factory prices, direct by post or from one of the 260 "Easiephit" Shoe Stores throughout England and Scotland.

Design 1472. Ladies' Suede Moccasins in Old Rose and Grey. Black Fur Bound. Warm Lined.

Price per Pair **5/6**

Also in Crimson and Grey, Super Quality, **7/6** *per pair.*

Ideal for Bedroom Wear and exceptionally smart.

Home Postage 6d. extra. Foreign Postage extra.

Write to-day for a **FREE** copy of **GREENLEES & SONS' HANDSOME 96-page ART CATALOGUE.** Catalogue shows a fine range of Direct from Factory Bargains in all styles and grades of Footwear for Man, Woman, or Child. We Make—We Sell—We Satisfy.

GREENLEES & SONS

("Easiephit" Footwear), Ltd.
(Dept. S.), East Park Road, LEICESTER

"Your Raincoat looks absolutely New

and so does my fur, now that CLARK'S have cleaned them."

Suits Cleaned - - - 5/6
Raincoats Cleaned and Re-proofed from 6/6 to 8/6

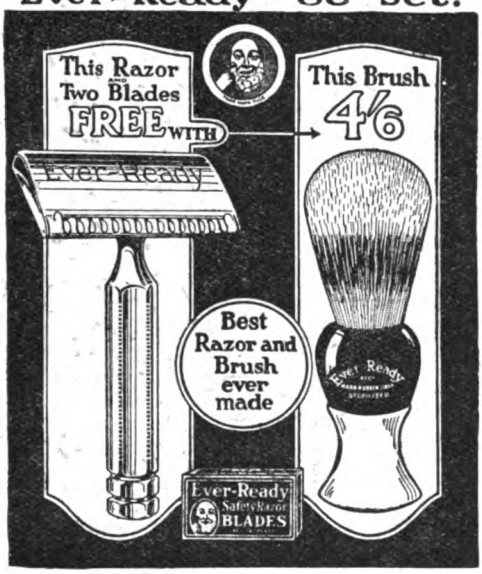
Fur Coats, Wraps and Neckties beautifully cleaned at moderate charges.

Postage Paid one way in British Isles.

CLARK'S DYE WORKS

(Established 1798) **RETFORD**

Ever-Ready "88" Set.



10/- Value for 4/6

The best razor and brush ever made

BUY this Ever-Ready Shaving Brush at any dealer for 4/6 and you will receive free of charge a famous Ever-Ready Razor and two blades. Each Ever-Ready Brush is rigidly sterilized and safe from all germs. The bristles are embedded in solid rubber and vulcanised to flint hardness. Don't hesitate. Get this fine gift to-day.

Obtainable wherever Safety Razors are sold.

BRITISH AMERICAN SAFETY RAZOR CO. LTD.,
3, Woodstock Street, Oxford Street, London, W.1.

C.F.H.

Christmas hopes in Dr Barnardo's Homes

WILL YOU BE SANTA CLAUS TO AN ORPHAN AND DESTITUTE CHILD?

You can purchase happiness at the Christmas Season by sending a Christmas Gift to the World's biggest family—7,725 boys and girls and babies—or for 10s. you can have the joy of feeling that you are feeding one child for ten days.

Cheques, etc., payable "Dr. Barnardo's Homes Food Fund" and crossed, and parcels of Toys, Clothing, and Blankets may be addressed to DR. BARNARDO'S HOMES, 183, BARNARDO HOUSE, STEPNEY CAUSEWAY, LONDON, E.1.

NOW for a jolly XMAS

with plenty of Mason's Ginger Wine with its good cheer and tingling glow. A most delicious non-intoxicating wine for young and old.
Everyone says: "Yes Please" when it is made with

MASON'S GINGER WINE ESSENCE

A 9d. Bottle makes 100 Glasses

Of Chemists, Grocers and Stores everywhere

Send 1/- for a bottle and we will give you name of nearest retailer.

Newball & Mason, Ltd. Nottingham

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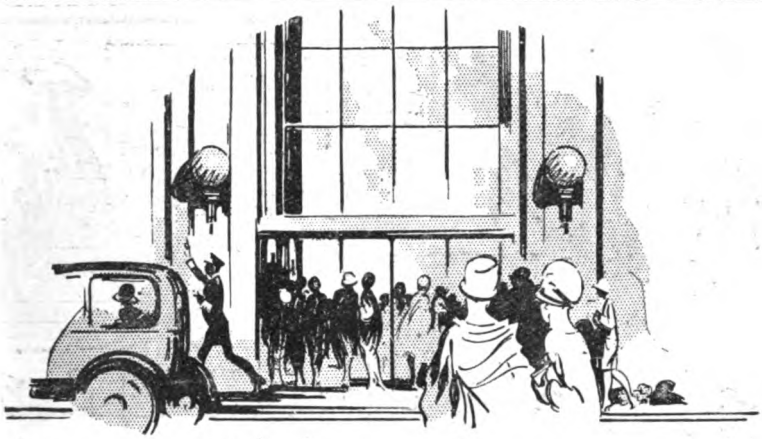

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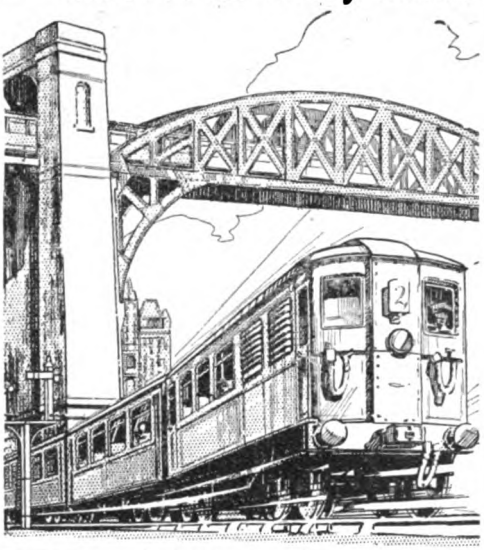

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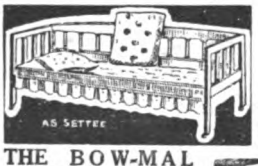

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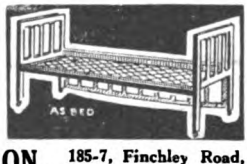

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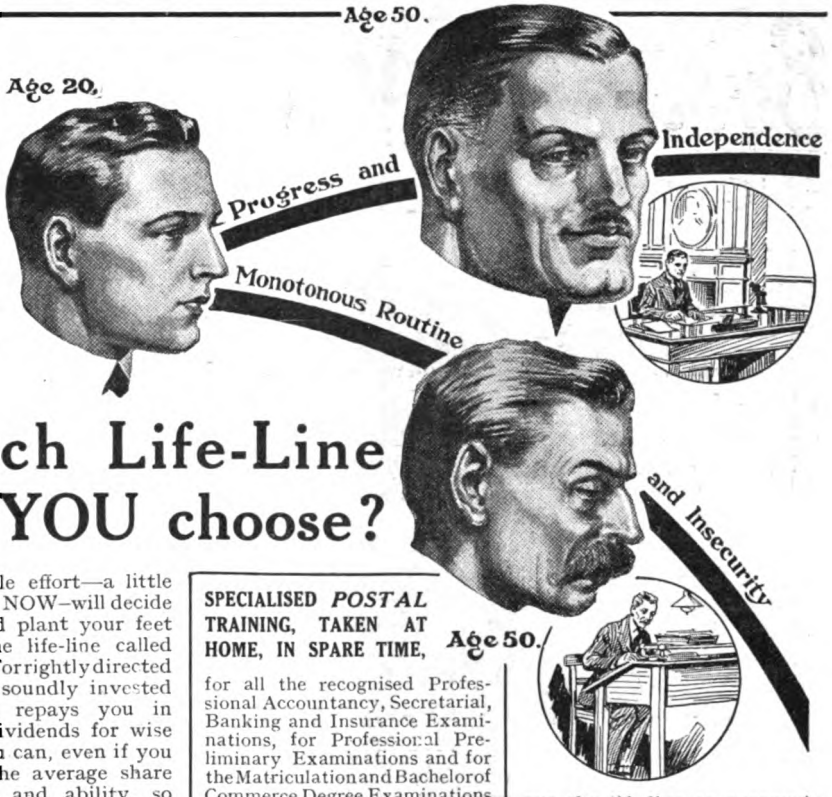

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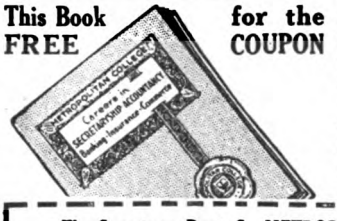

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Children's Combinations. Winter weight. High neck. Short sleeves. Sizes 0 to 8.

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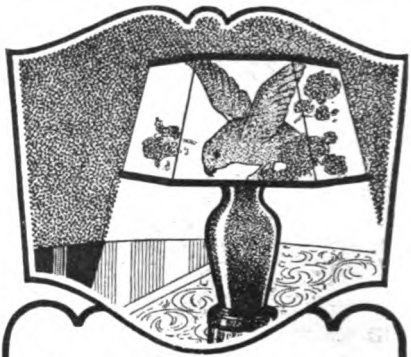

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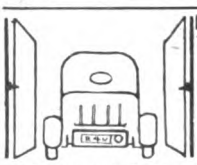

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to make a dish interesting add

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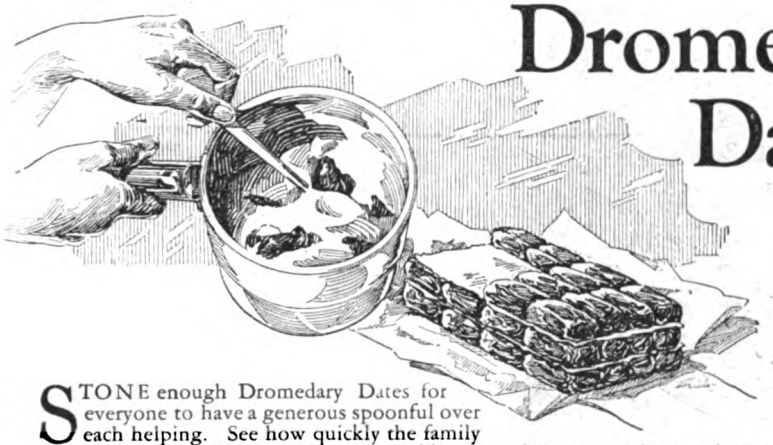

The only dates cleaned and packed by machines and not by natives' hands—twice pasteurised!

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Stone and chop a good handful of Dromedary Dates, when your rice pudding is nearly cooked sprinkle a layer to cover the top about a quarter of an inch thick. For a delicious change leave to get cold and turn out like a shape.

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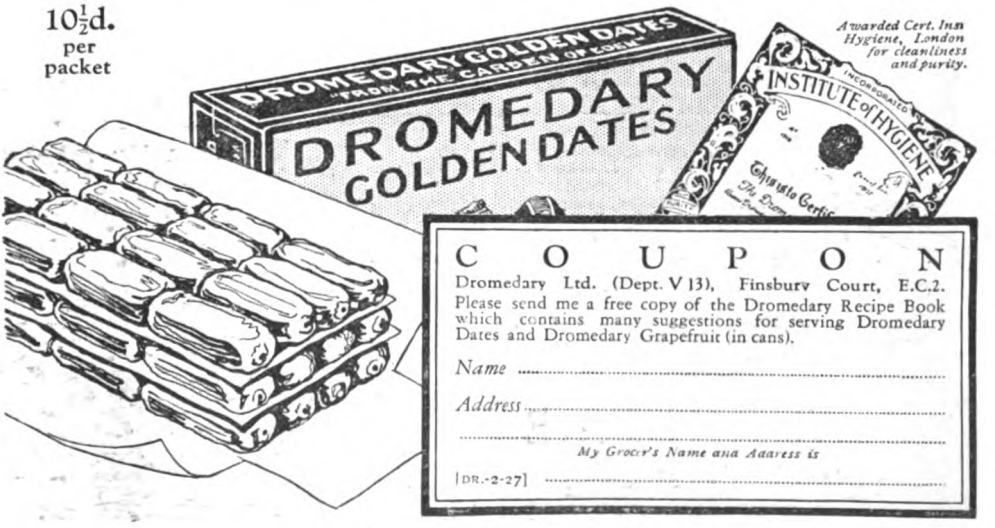

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My Grocer's Name and Address is

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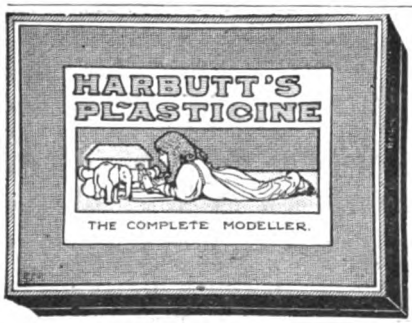

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PORTABLE LAMPS & BATTERIES
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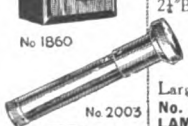
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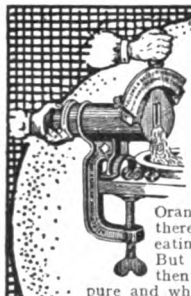

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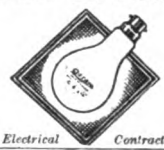

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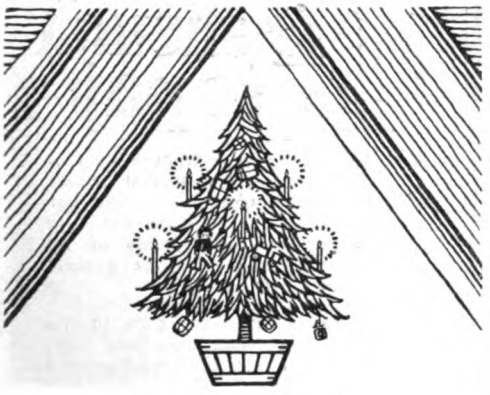

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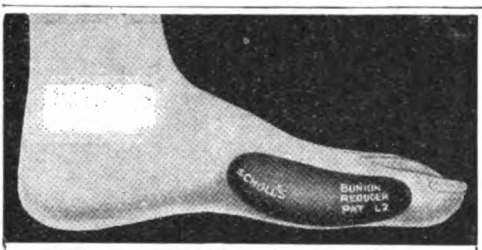

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The Dulcitone will be packed carefully, insured and sent freight paid to any shipping port abroad for **£4** *extra, cash with order.*

10 YEARS' WEAR!

Jute Soles last much longer than any others. Suit equally House or Sports; Home or Abroad. Mr. COOPER, Canada, says:—"*Have been wearing pair almost* 10 *years.*"

Mrs. C——, 7, Hackney Road, Maidstone, says:—"*So comfortable for standing long hours. Cannot do without them.*"

Prices post free in U.K. (Extra Abroad). Child's. Ladies'. Gent's

D. Leather fittings (as per illustration) ...	4/6	4/9	
E. Superior, Blocked (no strapping) Boots	1/- ex.	4/8	4/11
G. Superior 'Crepe' Rubber (Child's 11-1)	5/3	8/9	10/11

Rubber Wellington Boots, Best Black, 5 to 10, **10/5**, 11 to 2, **12/-**, 3 to 7, **13/11.**

Three pairs at one time, 2d. per pair off; Six pairs, 3d.

Full list, 1d.

PATENT SHOE CO., Central Road, **STEPPS, near GLASGOW.**

40 years Advertisers. Letter orders sent return post.

CLEMAK BLADES

A First-Class Shave with a First-Class Blade.

Covered for Every Risk!

A patented process of wire binding that prevents the shedding of Hair.

A soft, durable mixture of Badger & Hair.

Make a note of CLEMAK!

THE name with a Reputation.

A composition handle that will neither split nor break and is non-porous. Suitable for all climates.

A guarantee that this brush has been sterilized by a Certified process.

Postcard brings it C.O.D.

PRICE 3/6 LARGER SIZES 5/6 & 7/6

CLEMAK

WARNING against the danger of infection, look for the trade mark "CLEMAK" on your Shaving Brush. it is a guarantee that the bristles have been subjected to a special process of sterilization.

"Miles of Smiles"

Join the happy throng!

Thousands of happy men all using

'CLEMAK'

The first Safety Razor and as good as ever!

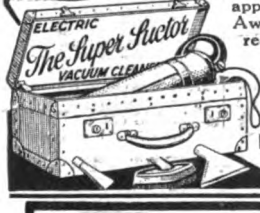
POPULAR SET 7/6. *A Postcard*
COMBINATION OUTFIT 12/6. *brings it C.O.D.*

Say "I must have the Clemak." Kingsway, London.

The Best Gift of All

THE CLEANER IN THE HANDY CASE

Here is something new. The Super Suctor is the simplest, lightest and most powerful electric vacuum cleaner made, and may now be obtained complete in a handy carrying case.



No gift will be more readily appreciated by womenfolk. Awarded **first prize** at the recent Breslau Exhibition.

A Free Demonstration will be gladly arranged on receipt of a Postcard, or write for Catalogue.

MITCHISON & BAILHACHE,
Ltd. (Dept. C),
120-122, Victoria St., S.W.

Buy Your Ring Direct

You save money, and can re-sell to us at any time at 10% less than the price you paid.

Send for a free copy of The Ring Book.

It is the most wonderful Catalogue of Rings in the World. It illustrates in colours 180 Rings showing all their natural sparkle and beauty. You can select from it quietly at home *as easily as if you had the actual Rings before you.* We send the Ring you select on 14 days' free approval and return your money in full if you are not satisfied. If you decide to keep it we undertake to re-purchase the Ring from you at any time less 10 per cent., according to the conditions in the Ring Book.

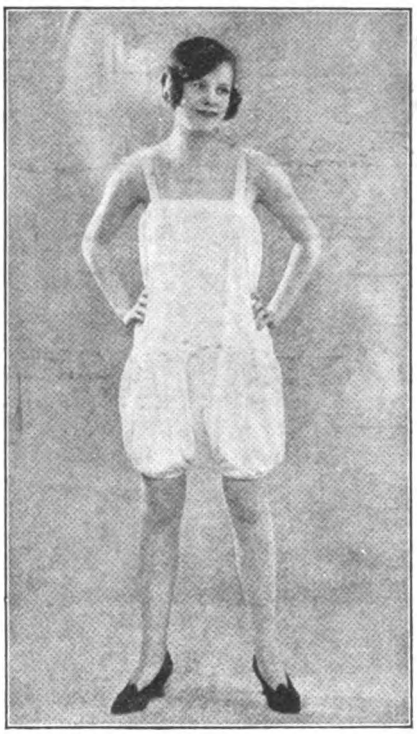
Write to-day for the Ring Book and finger size Card.

The NORTHERN GOLDSMITHS Co.

The Ring Shop for the World.

6, Goldsmiths Hall, NEWCASTLE upon TYNE *Established* 1892.

Foster Clark's
The Best and Creamiest Custard



No. 4435 **10/11**

Cami-bocker (the new garment). Fine Wool. Opera top. Elastic knees. Opening at side.

Miss 1926—and her Mother—will find in our latest range an "Alpine" garment agreeing patly with individual taste and the requirements of modern outer wear.

S&S Alpine (Regd.) Underwear

Ask for "Alpine" and look for the Dog's head on every garment. Every Ladies' Outfitter either stocks or can get "Alpine" for you. Write to address below for Booklet No. L 48, which illustrates several styles from our 1926 range.

All "Alpine" garments are guaranteed by the

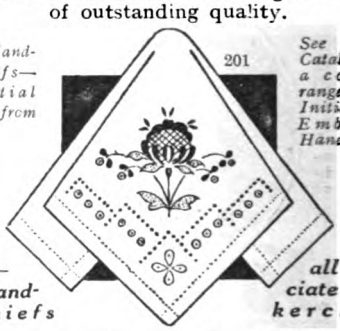
Manufacturers: **STAPLEY & SMITH, Ltd., 128, London Wall - - - London, E.C.2.**

Give Hutton's Real Irish Linen

Beautiful and Useful

Whether it's a tablecloth or napkin of fine damask, an embroidered coverlet or box of handkerchiefs, you are sure of giving something that will delight and remain a pleasant reminder of your friendship through a long life-time of usefulness. Send direct to Hutton's of Larne, Ulster, the home of fine linen. You save money by purchasing in this way. The half-a-century reputation of this good old-fashioned firm is a guarantee of outstanding quality.

Initial Handkerchiefs—any initial supplied from stock.



See Hutton's Catalogue for a complete range of Plain, Initial, and Embroidered Handkerchiefs

If in doubt—give Handkerchiefs

They all appreciate Handkerchiefs

Irish Linen Handkerchiefs

Ladies' Fine Hemstitched Irish Linen Handkerchiefs with narrow hem, exceptional value. Size 11 ins., **3/6** per doz. 12 ins. **5/-** per doz.
Men's Hemstitched Irish Linen Handkerchiefs, Size 17 ins., **8/6** per doz. 18 ins., **10/6** per doz.
Ladies' Fine Hemstitched Linen Handkerchiefs with any initial. Size 11 ins., **6/6** per doz.
Men's Fine Hemstitched Linen Handkerchiefs with any initial. Size 18 ins., **14/6** per doz.
Ladies' Extra Fine Hemstitched Linen Handkerchiefs (No. 201, as illustrated), size about 11 ins. with narrow hem, beautifully worked in fine white embroidery in one corner. 6 handkerchiefs for **5/3.** Also at **7/-.**

Linen Damask Table Cloths

Irish Linen Damask Table Cloths of good, reliable quality in handsome Shamrock design. Size 2 x 2 yds., **16/-** each. 2 x 2½ yds. **20/-** each. 2 x 3 yds., **24/-** each. Linen Napkins to match, 22 ins., **9/-** per half-doz.

Irish Linen Tray Cloths

Irish Linen Hemstitched Tray Cloths made from the finest quality of Irish Linen, worked in fine white embroidery; shamrock design. Size 14x20 ins., **3/-** each. 15x22 ins., **3/3** each. 16x23 ins., **4/3** each. 18x26 ins., **5/3** each.

Linen Cosey Covers

Fine White Irish Linen Cosey Covers with hemstitched and scalloped edge embroidered in Shamrocks, **3/6** each. Plain Linen Cosey Covers with hemstitched and scalloped edge, **2/3** each.

Linen Nightdress Cases

Ladies' Fine Irish Linen nightdress cases, hemstitched and embroidered with Shamrock, **6/3** each. Brush and Comb bags to match, **3/-** each.

CHRISTMAS BARGAIN LIST FREE

Send your Orders for Cash on Delivery. We pay postage and all charges on parcels over 20/-. On orders under 20/- add 6d. for postage. Goods not approved can be returned to be exchanged or money refunded.

Hutton's

95, Main Street, Larne, Ulster

A CHRISTMAS DE LUXE TO EVERYBODY
To Joan
To Bobbie
To Gwen
To Auntie
To Cissie
To Mother
To Tommy
To Father
To Betty
Mackintosh's
make
CHRISTMAS
a
CARNIVAL
de Luxe
for everybody!
DELIGHTFUL CHOCOLATES & DELICIOUS TOFFEES IN CHARMING TINS AND BOXES
Send for Coloured List or ask your Confectioner to show you the Xmas Selection
John Mackintosh, & Sons Ltd. Toffee Town, Halifax, England.

"Life's not so dusty"
with a
WHIRLWIND

ALL BRITISH
AND
without an EQUAL

CASH PRICE
£4 : 19 : 6
Complete : No Extras.

NOT ELECTRIC
OBTAINABLE EVERYWHERE.

Also obtainable on Deferred Terms and delivered on First Payment of 10/-

Write for Illustrated Booklet and Full Particulars to :—

STAPLEY, HARRISON & WATSON, Ltd., Moorgate Station Chambers, E.C.2

'Allenburys'

Progressive System of Infant Feeding

Does baby's food provide the requisite nourishment to advance the rapid development that should take place during the first few months of his life ? The use of the 'Allenburys' system removes any doubt that the food will be adequate for all baby's needs. This Progressive way is the rational way and the safe way. As baby progresses his food is adapted to suit and promote his gradually developing powers of digestion and assimilation. In this way the balance of nourishment is maintained and robust growth and progress provided for.

Milk Food No. 1
Birth to 3 months

Milk Food No. 2
3 to 6 months

Malted Food No. 3
6 months and onwards

COUPON

ALLEN & HANBURYS LTD.,
37 Lombard Street, London, E.C. 3

Mrs. .....

.....

will be pleased to receive, free of charge, a copy of the 'Allenburys' book 'Infant Feeding and Management,' and a ¼-lb sample of Food.

Her baby's age is.....

Strand Mag., Dec. 1926.

Keep Step With Good Style

Order the latest styles from Barratts' factory. Each shoe is scientifically modelled to help you to Walk the Barratt Way—gracefully, attractively, and fashionably. Every pair ordered saves you 4d. in the shilling because there are no middlemen's profits to be paid. Order your pair to-day, there is no risk. Fitting by post is no difficulty. Satisfaction or money back guaranteed.

Factory Price

14/9

Post Free. *Style 6319.*

Sizes stocked: 2, 2½, 3, 3½, 4, 4½, 5, 5½, 6, 6½, 7. *Each in comfortable width.*

Enjoy a Brisk Walk in This Handsome Patent Shoe

The dainty strapwork at sides is backed with leather and is the latest idea. In the forefront of fashion, too, is the low "mannish" heel. Back quarters are lined stainless leather and the insole is solid leather. High-grade patent leather upper, scientifically modelled to give snug instep and ankle fitting. Smart, easy toe, close-edged, durable, solid English leather sole. Will give distinction to any wearer and put pleasure in every step.

Write for Superb Catalogue of Footshape Footwear Enclose Twopence Postage

Write to-day and Secure this Marvellous Value

Send cheque or money order for 14/9. Mention style 6319 and give size required, or send Footshape, pencil outline of stockinged foot resting with normal pressure on paper. Hold pencil upright. Send 10/- deposit with Overseas C.O.D. orders. If Overseas add postage. Mailing weight 1 lb. 12 ozs.

W. BARRATT & CO., Ltd., 20, Footshape, Northampton

Make your Xmas bright with a PIFCO LAMP

The ideal gift—a mantle and wick lamp which gives one hundred candle power soft radiant light from ordinary paraffin.

PIFCO

27/6

Complete with Shade.

Obtainable from your local dealer.

Catalogue of various patterns free from

PIFCO HOUSE, 33, High Street, MANCHESTER.

DO YOU ENJOY SHAVING?

Perhaps not, but you *will* if you *use* the new pattern MAB with detachable Guard. Thousands of men who had never dared to use a straight blade Razor before are using the new Mab with absolute satisfaction. Mab blades have a 30 years' reputation for quality. Handy, light, and easy to manipulate over the face.

"Mab" SAFETY SHAVER

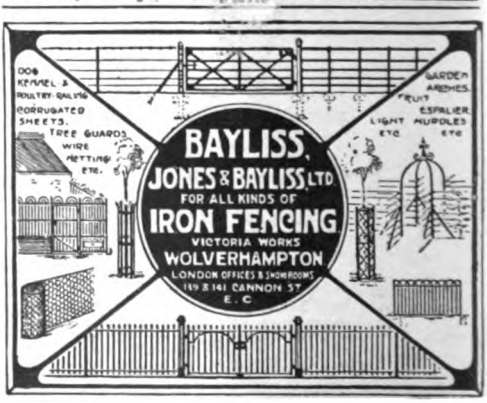
6/-

BRITISH MADE.

Dwarf Size (old pattern without Guard)	4/6
Medium	5/6
THE MAB PATENT PNEUMATIC STROP ..	5/6

Of Dealers, or post free from

MAB CO., 73, NEWHALL ST., BIRMINGHAM.



Sketching
for Pleasure & Profit

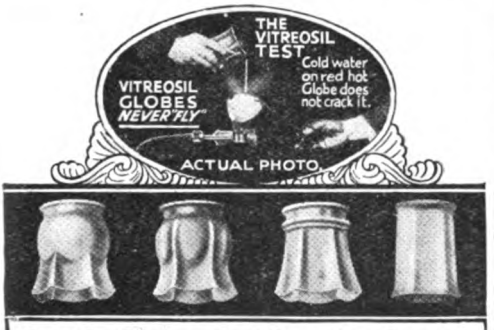
Why not make the most of the long evenings this Winter? I can introduce you to a Hobby which will bring joy and interest into *every minute* you devote to it. That Hobby is Sketching. There is no Hobby to compare with it. For other Hobbies you need a commencing proficiency, in craftsmanship or technical knowledge. I do not mind if you have never had *one lesson* in Drawing. If you really wish to learn, I can teach you in a way that is joyous from the very beginning.

Sketching is really the most natural thing possible . . . even primitive man could draw. He got his inspiration direct from Nature and *you* can start by doing simple outlines from Nature and almost before you are aware of it, you will be doing original sketches and studies of all those things that interest you . . . humorous incidents, quaint expressions, trees silhouetted against the sky!

Write for my Free Illustrated Prospectus and read the experiences of Pupils I have trained. When I show you exactly what my Lessons have done for other Students you can realise what they may do for *you*.

Whether Sketching interests you as a Hobby or as a Career, let me send you my Prospectus. This will show you how you can learn to draw, easily and successfully, by Post.

Address: Percy V. Bradshaw, Principal, PRESS ART SCHOOL (Dept.S.M. 137), Tudor Hall, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23.



Buy the Globes that Save the Pocket

Vitreosil (pure fused silica) Gas Globes are far more satisfactory than glass or opal. They never crack with heat, they will increase the life and efficiency of your mantles and give you the ideal light for reading and working. Ask your Ironmonger or Gas Co. for Vitreosils.

Send for interesting folder from the sole manufacturers,

VITREOSIL Heat-Proof Gas Globes

THE THERMAL SYNDICATE, LTD.,

DEPT. L.3, VITREOSIL WORKS, WALLSEND-ON-TYNE.

Est. 20 years.

London Depot: 28, Victoria Street, S.W.1.

Would You Like a Pension of £500 From Age 55?

Suppose your age is 35 and you aim at £500 a year for life from age 55. You arrange with the Sun Life of Canada—the great Annuity Co.—to accept yearly deposits from you of a fixed amount. To these deposits—the safety of which is assured by the Company's Government-supervised assets of over £62,000,000—are added profits on the generous scale made possible by the Company's wonderful prosperity. At 55 your deposits, plus these splendid profits, will entitle you to an income for life of about £500. Or, if you prefer the reward of your thrift and sound judgment in a Capital Sum, about £6,000 will be paid over to you. This is made up of the £4,000 policy, plus anticipated profits (according to present rate) of £2,000.

There are other great advantages with this plan. For instance:—

Every deposit you make entitles you to a rebate on your Income Tax—so much per year in **your** pocket instead of in the Treasury. If the present rate continues, this means an additional saving to you of about £470.

Then, supposing illness or accident in the interim permanently unfitted you for work, £40 a month would be paid to you, and your own deposits would automatically be made by the company itself.

Your family also receives financial protection from the moment you make your first deposit. £4,000, plus half of every deposit made to date, will be paid to them in the event of your death. Should that be through accident, the sum would be increased to £8,000, plus half all deposits.

Let us know your name, address, exact age, and the approximate amount you can deposit yearly, and, without any obligation on your part, we will tell you exactly how you can apply this ideal Plan of Investment-Insurance to your own circumstances. Address your inquiry to J. F. Junkin (Manager), Sun Life of Canada, 6, Sun of Canada House, Victoria Embankment (*near Temple Station*), London, W.C.2.

FOOTS' ADAPTA TABLE

AN IDEAL XMAS GIFT.

Can be instantly raised, lowered, or inclined. The Ideal Table for reading, writing, or taking meals in bed with perfect comfort. It is just as conveniently used with Chair or Couch, and cannot overbalance.

Price with detachable side tray and automatic book-holders (as illustrated) **£4:4:0**

Adapta Tables from **£3 : 3 : 0** upwards, carriage paid.

Write for descriptive booklet A.3.

J. FOOT & SON LTD
168 GREAT PORTLAND ST
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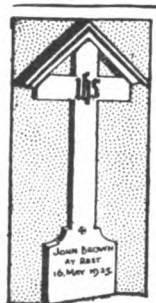
BUNIONS
Scientifically Cured

Bunions can be cured by the most efficient and scientific method — Pond's Toe Glove. It restores the toe gently to its normal position. Made of thin, pliable aluminium covered with the best para rubber, it can be worn in any easy-fitting shoe. Recommended by Doctors. *Send outline of foot. Money returned if not approved.*

3/11 EACH

POND'S TOE GLOVE

H. R. POND, *Arch Support Maker*, NORWICH.



Pent-roof Calvary Cross in Hard Teak Wood, 3ft. 6in. high.
SPECIAL PRICE **£7 10s.**

Churchyard Memorials

in the beautiful Silvery-Grey CORNISH GRANITE.

Tributes of Beauty and Permanence.
CARRIAGE PAID AND FIXED
in any Cemetery or Churchyard in England or Wales.

RECUMBENT LATIN CROSS - - £10
BEVELLED GRANITE CURBING - £15
(or PLAIN CURBING) - - - £12

Illus. Booklet (S.M.) Post Free.

MAILE & SON, Ltd.,
367, Euston Rd., LONDON, N.W.1.
FOUNDED 1785.

Don't let Headaches Mar your Christmas

The jolliest party soon becomes a dull affair when you are racked with Headache, Neuralgia or any other tormenting Nerve Pain. But these wretched "kill-joys" will hold no terrors for you if you keep a bottle of Genasprin tablets at hand Two tablets, taken in a little water, will banish the severest pain almost instantly.

Moreover, Genasprin is guaranteed to be *pure* and *safe*. It is, in fact, the **ideal pain-reliever.** A physician, writing in the *Medical Times*, states: "... . In Neuralgia, Headache, or rheumatic pains in the eyes and forehead, the frequent use of small doses of Genasprin affords effective relief from pain."

Resolve now to keep a supply of Genasprin always at hand, then you will ensure your Christmas being free from the menace of Headaches.

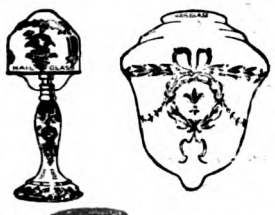
GENASPRIN

(The SAFE Brand of Aspirin)

You can obtain Genasprin at all chemists—price 2/- per bottle of 35 tablets. **Buy a bottle to-day.**

GENATOSAN LTD., LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICS.

The Empire is proud of "HAILGLASSWARE"



because it is the Empire's glorious *symbol* of artistic charm, nobleness, beauty, purity and strength. Support it and you support the Empire.

Made only by—
ACKROYD & BEST, LTD.,
Glass Makers & Metal Stampers,
MORLEY, nr. LEEDS, ENGLAND.
Showrooms : **32, Shaftesbury Ave., London, W.1.**
98, Mansell Street, London, E.1.
Trade supplied on good terms.

'SOL' PERAMS.

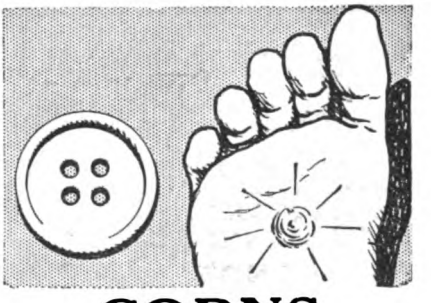
BEST LONDON STYLES.

Purchased in A.D. 1883 by Queen Victoria.
Awarded 4 Prize Medals.

INSIST UPON SEEING THE— SOL TRADE MARK CONVEX SIDES

The "ETRUSCAN" (Patented & Registered) £10:10:9
OTHER "SOL" PERAMS from £3:19:6.
More than 40 different designs.
Mounted on the Patent "Sol-no-jar" Springs. Guaranteed Perfect, Artistic, Durable, and Cheap.

THE NEW PATENT "SOL" STORMSCREEN.
Like a roof sheds rainwater off apron.
OF ALL PERAMBULATOR DEALERS.
A Good Selection shown by The Army & Navy Stores, Whiteley's, Selfridge's, Civil Service Stores, John Barker's, Maples, Etc.
Write for Illustrated Catalogue.
Wholesale Manufacturers : SIMMONS & CO., LONDON, S.E.1



CORNS
removed at first soaking

No matter how long you may have suffered from corns, Radox Bath Salts will remove them without trouble and without pain. To cut a corn is but to prune it, and for the temporary relief you suffer increased agony a little later. A Radox footbath is the certain way to be rid of a corn. Read this letter :—

"As an agricultural labourer, I have suffered agonies and have tried all sorts of so-called cures . . . We got a packet of Radox and the result was marvellous. The first soaking fetched out two large corns that nothing else would touch. One is about half an inch round and stood out from the foot a good quarter inch like a button."—A. L. 14th Jan., 1926.

When you put your feet into a footbath containing Radox, the Salts soften the hard outer layers of the corn and the oxygen which Radox liberates enters the pores, opens them and penetrates right to the root of the corn, which is thus loosened so that it can be lifted out bodily. The life-giving oxygen leaves the feet clean and healthy.

Ask for Radox at your chemist's, price 1/6 per ½-lb. Pink Packet. 2/6 double quantity.

Radox Bath Salts
Give your feet that "Kruschen Feeling."

1/6
Half-pound Pink Pkt.

That interrupting Cough—

Sensitive people suffer acute discomfort when their irritating cough interferes with their own enjoyment and that of others. This is often painfully evident when 'listening-in' or when at the theatre or concert.

Immediate relief from such troublesome coughs may be had by taking an 'Allenburys' Glycerine and Black Currant Pastille. They clear the throat and allay irritation.

Allenburys Glycerine & Black Currant PASTILLES

YOUR CHEMIST STOCKS THEM

Packed in distinctive tin boxes containing

2 oz. 8d. 8 oz. 2/3
4 oz. 1/3 1 lb. 4/3

Allen & Hanburys Ltd., London

Send a POST CARD

AFFIX ½d STAMP HERE

To J. & J. Cash Ltd Dept. A4, Coventry

And you will receive by return a complete range of patterns and styles of the famous

CASH'S NAMES

Woven on fine cambric tape in the following fast colours: Red, Black, Green, Gold, Sky, and Navy Blue Lettering. They are so easily attached; just a few stitches and they're on.

12 dozen (144 names) **5/-** **6 dozen** (72 names) **3/9** **3 dozen** (36 names) **2/9**

Obtainable from all Drapers and Outfitters at short notice.

Woven Marks for Monomark Holders in various Styles and Colours.

DISTINCTIVE FABRICS & TAILORING

"Our Quality is Economy."

Egerton Burnett's "Royal" E.B. Serges

Patterns of Serges, etc., for Ladies, Gentlemen and Children post free.

OUR "ROYAL" NAVY BLUE SERGES retain their colour indefinitely. Always fashionable. Also in Black, Cream, and Colours. For men, women, and juveniles, in light and heavy weights. Prices from **3/9½** to **27/11** per yard. SUPERFINE SUITINGS, COATINGS, DRESS FABRICS, etc.

Any Quantity Sold.

TAILORING OF DISTINCTION. Lounge Suits from **89/-**. Costumes from **69/6**. Boys' Suits from **46/-** and Girls' Costumes from **46/6**.

Carr. C.O.D. charges paid on orders of 20/- in the British Isles.

EGERTON BURNETT, L. Dept., Wellington, Som., Eng.

ARE YOU UNABLE TO WALK?

Here is good news for you. The Jas. P. Witham *Hand Propelled* machines provide those who cannot walk with a splendid means of locomotion. Fitted with free wheel and single, 2-speed or 3-speed gear, perfect in construction, they are thoroughly reliable and world-famed for ease of running and hill-climbing.

Fitted with special hill-climbing gear.

HAND-TRICYCLES from £24.

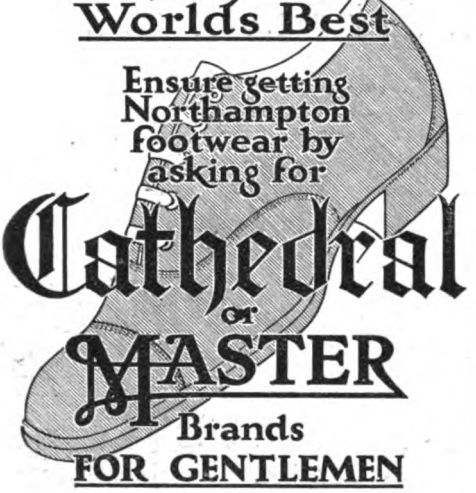
IF YOU CANNOT WALK

write for interesting particulars of these splendid machines, also *Indoor* and *Motor* chairs, as perfected and built by one himself unable to walk. Address—

Jas. P. Witham Co., *Invalid Chair Specialists,* **29, Pyle House, Newport, Isle of Wight.**

Are your shoes Northampton Made?

if so, they are the Worlds Best



Ensure getting Northampton footwear by asking for

Cathedral or MASTER Brands

FOR GENTLEMEN

The shoes to choose

CHINA *from* STAFFORDSHIRE

The famous

"FLORENCE" PATTERN SERVICES

in Swansea Light Blue Colour.
FINEST THIN SEMI CHINA :—

TEA SET 21 pieces (6 persons) Gold finished	**13/6**
TEA SET 40 pieces (12 persons) Gold finished	**24/6**
TEA & BREAKFAST SET 40 pieces (6 persons) Gold finished ...	**26/6**
TEAPOT or HOT WATER JUG 1½ pt. Gold finished	**3/6**
DINNER SET 26 pieces (6 persons) without Gold **31/6**. Gold finish	**40/-**

PACKED FREE. CARRIAGE PAID on orders £2 and over. Safe delivery guaranteed.

SAMPLE PUDDING PLATE 1/- Post Free.

Goods Shipped to all parts of the World.

FREE: **ART POTTERY ALBUM** in Colours and Gold, showing China, Glass and Cutlery of every description for Household. **BADGED WARE** for Hotels, Schools, Regiments, etc., a speciality.

Thousands of Testimonials.

Established 26 Years.

The Fenton Pottery Co.,
(Dept. 1), ROYAL FENTON WORKS,
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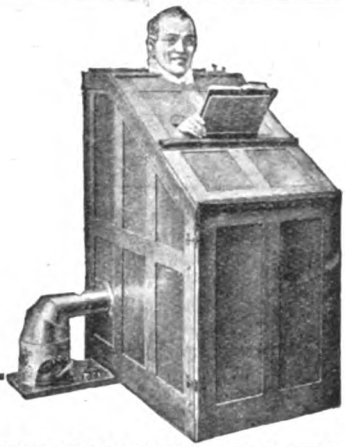

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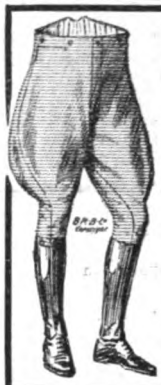

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IT is not too much to say that the vast majority of people who over-indulge in alcohol do so less from native greed than because they have allowed alcohol to obtain a hold upon them and are unable to throw it off.

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The "to-morrow" stage, into which the sufferer has slipped, gradually and almost unconsciously, is extraordinarily difficult to escape from. Continual reliance on alcohol has sapped the will-power to such an extent that he cannot make a firm stand. Everything is against him. He feels depressed, ill, shaky, on the verge of collapse; and it usually happens that he has to carry on in the ordinary way and pretend that nothing is the matter. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, he cannot stand it, and gives in. Despairing, he returns to the one thing in the world which he *knows* will alleviate his misery. The Turvey Treatment cures all this without any trouble. The effect of the treatment is felt from the very first dose, and the patient feels none of the acute distress to which we have alluded; the treatment involves no discontinuance of work or of ordinary pursuits; it can be taken in the patient's own home; it is entirely harmless, sure, and lasting.

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Nat Savage.

I DON'T pretend to be "literary," and I feel diffident at labelling my string of modest successes in journalism a "career," but since Mr. Meggy has decided on the title I will submit, with this mild protest, for I owe Mr. Meggy a great deal.

Writing always appealed to me, and concocting essays was the only schoolboy activity that kept me in the middle ruck of my form. In the Army my pen found its natural outlet in letter-writing.

I came back to civil life with the itch to write real stuff, worth paying for and worth printing. For months I pegged away in my leisure hours and sold exactly three articles, which were all on subjects of which I had a special knowledge.

Looking askance at all correspondence methods I blundered on my way, by sheer luck scoring a few successes, and by sheer pig-headedness accumulating piles and piles of rejection slips.

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Mr. Meggy began to knock me into shape. He trained me into looking for subjects where they are to be found—the deep and inexhaustible wells of Matrimony, Murders, Money, Meals, Mantles, Malaises and many more, but alliteration fails me! His criticisms are pungent where necessary. He will knock your clumsy, shambling stuff to bits, and then show you how, out of the same components, to build up a smooth-running, interesting article.

Now I can generally depend on selling two articles out of three, and in my best month this year (1925), I disposed of 95 per cent. of my output. I have a long way to go yet before I am satisfied with myself, but for the present the fruits of my evening and week-end labours form a very useful addition to my salary.

And quite apart from the financial aspect, free-lancing is fascinating and stimulating. It keeps you alert, makes your ordinary occupation even more interesting, and turns the world from a little space inside you to a great company of interests all round you.

N. J. Savage

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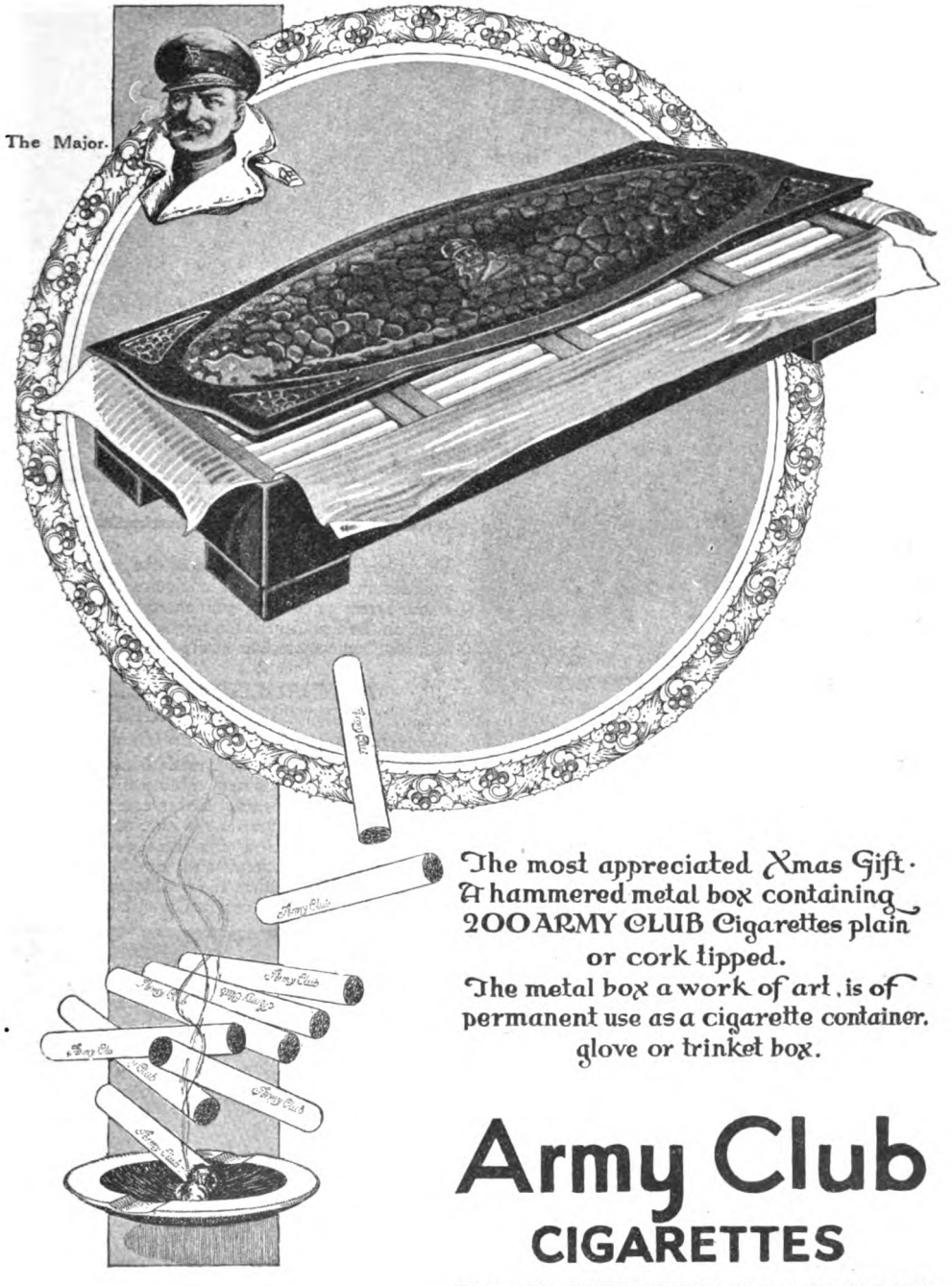

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By A. P. HERBERT and NIGEL PLAYFAIR.

(*Fisher Unwin. 7/6*)

To be published in book form and to be "introduced" by Mr. John Galsworthy are honours undreamed of by the average revue. How is it that "Riverside Nights" has achieved this dignity? This daintily-produced book provides the answer, as it succeeds, without the aid of music or stage setting, in keeping the reader thoroughly amused. One of the cleverest things in it is "It may be life——" the lament of a servant girl that real

"It may be life——"

life falls so far below that of the cinema. Here is one of the verses:—

"For I don't have no adventures in the street;
Men don't register emotion when we meet.
Jack don't register jealousy and such—
Jack don't register nothin' very much.
But Jack says 'Evenin','
And I says 'Evenin','
And we both stand there at the corner of the square,
Me like a statue and 'im like a bear.
He don't look lovin' like the movie men,
He just holds tight till the clock strikes ten.
Jack says 'Kiss me,' and I says 'Right.'
Jack says 'Happy?' and I says 'Quite.'
Jack just whispers, and I can hardly speak.
An' that's the most exciting thing that happens in the week."

HENRY CHAPLIN: A MEMOIR.

By His Daughter, The MARCHIONESS OF LONDONDERRY.

(*Macmillan. 21/-*)

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Henry Chaplin.
(From the painting by Linwood-Palmer and A. Talmadge.)

That, however, was but one of the many stirring episodes in the life of "The Squire of Blankney," whose career as country gentleman of the good old type, on the Turf, in the hunting field, and as Cabinet Minister, reads more like a fairy-tale than real life.

A NATURALIST AT THE ZOO.

By E. G. BOULENGER.

Illustrated by L. R. Brightwell. (*Duckworth. 10/6*)

"The Aquarium Book" made Mr. Boulenger so many friends that this new volume of his is assured of a very wide welcome. In his company we visit practically every corner of the Zoo, and his sense of humour makes him a delightful companion and guide. The illustrations, also, are full of humour and observation, so that the book should prove one of the "best-sellers" of the Christmas season.

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By H. NORDEN. (*Witherby. 16/-*)

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A Malaita chief carrying his fortune round his neck.

EVERYBODY'S PEPYS.

Abridged and Edited by O. F. Morshead.

Illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard.

(*Bell. 10/6*)

Last year that delightful artist, Mr. Ernest H. Shepard, was associated with one of the greatest publishing successes of the season as the illustrator of "When We Were Very Young." This year, we feel confident, he will have another popular success with "Everybody's Pepys." The sixty illustrations he has done for this skilful condensation of one of the world's great books will be the means of introducing it to a far wider public than it has yet obtained—for which that public should be for ever grateful!

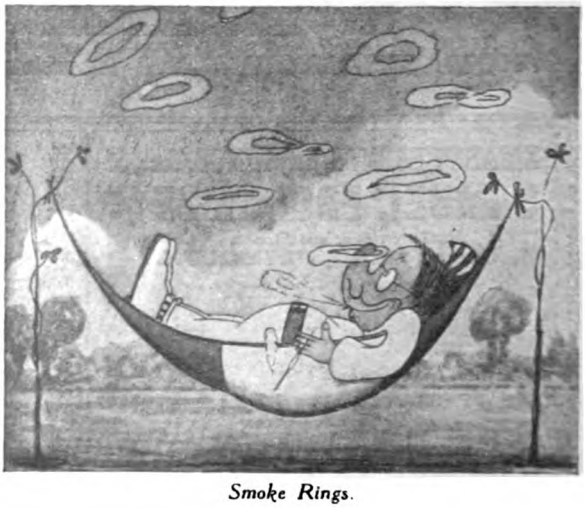
"Reading myself asleep, while the wench sat mending my breeches by my bedside."

SMOKE RINGS.

Written and Illustrated by WILLIAM CAINE.

(*Stanley Paul. 3/6*)

Even the most cursory of glances into "Smoke Rings" shows what a delightful humorist was lost to this none too cheerful world by the death of William Caine. He was, perhaps, better known as a writer than an artist, but as the illustrator of his own happy thoughts he was seen at his best. How good that was may be seen from these thirty-one examples, ranging from "The Disadvantage of Having Ears" to "Why I Avoid Lotteries," from "Acrostics" to "Plus Fours."



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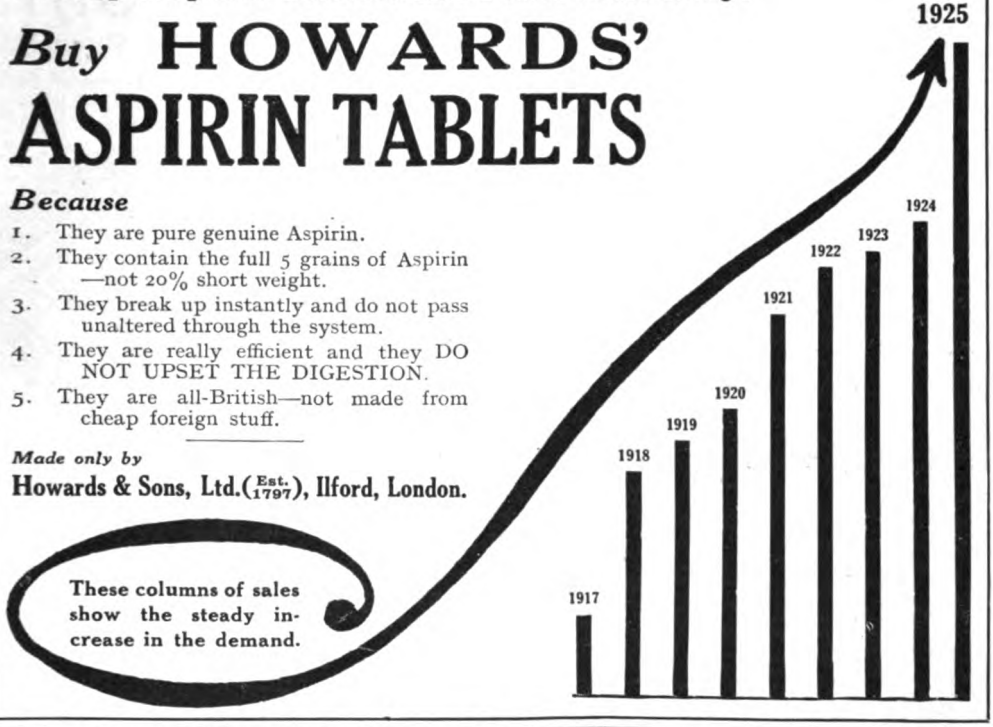

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with Perfect Health, Abundance of Vitality and Strength? You CAN attain all the above by the **DANKS' FAMOUS SYSTEM** and Rejuvenating Apparatus for the startlingly low fee of **8/9** only. It doesn't matter what your present Physical Condition may be, I guarantee that in a few short weeks, with my help, THE RESULTS OF MY SYSTEM **WILL ASTOUND YOU** and your friends. **THOUSANDS** have derived untold benefits from my system during the last 20 years, and the results of my system are shown in my own person and in the persons of my pupils, which is sound recommendation. Let me include you amongst my delighted satisfied pupils.

The Danks' System positively cures **Constipation, Indigestion, Weak Nerves, Sluggish Liver, Obesity, Sleeplessness, the Worry Habit, Round Shoulders, Flat and Pigeon Chests, Thin Arms and Legs, and Increases Height, etc., etc.**

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appeals to fastidious men because of the perfect cut, style and saving this new method of post order tailoring ensures.

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For Dry Cleaning at Home.
If your garage or Ironmonger does not stock, write direct for 7 days' trial outfit including 1 brush, ½pt. tin of Mutax spirit and booklet on dry cleaning. **12/6** post free.
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NEVER neglect a cough or cold. "Catch it young" and thus avoid risk of long and serious illness. A few doses of Powell's Balsam of Aniseed will generally suffice. This grand century-old remedy for coughs and colds and winter ills should be in every home. It is safe, swift and certain and can be freely given to children and invalids. It soothes, warms and strengthens the throat, chest and lungs, and protects them against further attacks. Look for the "Lion, Net and Mouse"—it is your guarantee against deception.

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From Boots, Taylors, Timothy White, all Chemists and Stores, or direct from **Thomas Powell, Ltd.** (Desk 15), **Blackfriars Road, London, S.E.**

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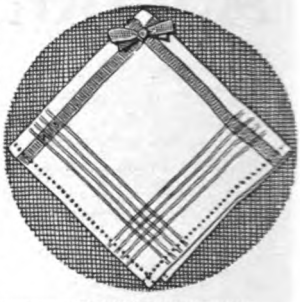
which are Safe and Popular

It is always safe to give handkerchiefs—if they are of fine Irish Linen. No gift is so sure of a welcome from young and old.

No. D.36 (as illustrated). Ladies' linen hemstitched handkerchiefs with corded borders. Size about 11 inches with ⅛ inch hem. Special Offer. Per doz. **4/3**



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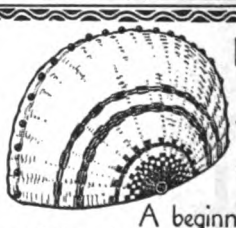
Irish Linen Manufacturers **BELFAST** *The Home of Irish Linen*



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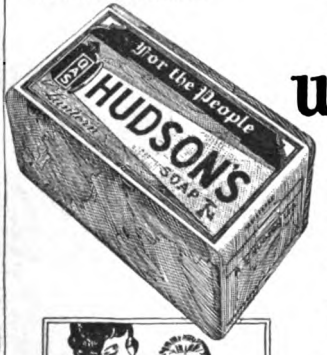

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their temper and their health by using Hudson's Soap in powder. They shake Hudson's Soap on the floor; they scatter a little in the washing-up water. The effect is wonderful. Their grandmothers knew it before them—they knew that Hudson's Soap was the talisman that would save them backache and worry, and so help to keep

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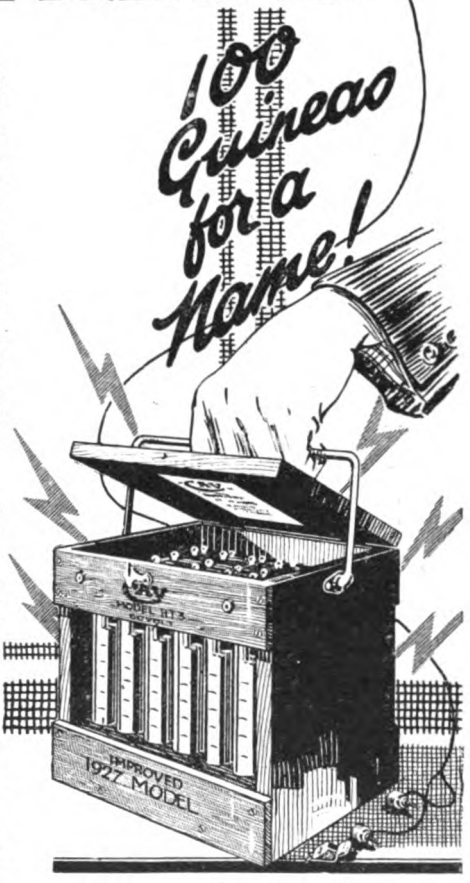

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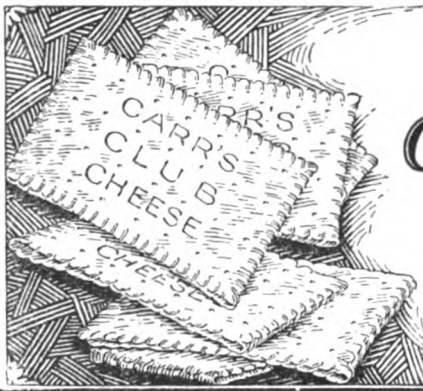

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Made only by
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If already you have not tried it, a wonderful dish awaits you —

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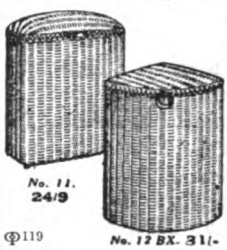

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Have you seen the new Loom Woven products? There are no ends to damage dainty fabrics, the fibre being woven in continuous strands.

The baskets are finished in charming colours, are durable and very beautiful.

SEND NOW for Lloyd Loom Book of Work and Linen Baskets, Easy Chairs and Settees, Tea Tables, etc., or ask for them at any good store.

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We make SETS from 30/- to £10.
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We blend Doctor's China Tea from the very choicest leaf for flavour's sake. Try it yourself.

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1/4 POUND

Send **6d.** in stamps to cover postage and packing and we will promptly send you a 2-oz. packet of each of the **3/4** and **4/-** qualities, making in all a free quarter lb. of the world's finest China Tea.

This delicious tea, with a sure appeal to the connoisseur, has all excess tannin eliminated, which allows the true flavour to be appreciated and makes it safe for Dyspeptics and Invalids.

There are **3** qualities— **3/4, 4/-** and **4/6.**

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Doubles itself as you use it!

and not a tiny atom wasted—

The compact, handy Monkey Brand tablet represents the power of brightness compressed into the most convenient shape and size.

There's never any waste with Monkey Brand, for not a bit more is used than is absolutely necessary.

Rub your damp cloth lightly over the Monkey tablet and at once you have a perfect supply of smooth, even-cleaning power—no dry lumps to scratch fine surfaces—no brighter shines than those which come from Monkey Brand.

A forty years' record of untarnished brilliance behind every tablet. Cleans house from roof to cellar. Makes copper like gold—tin like silver—paint like new.

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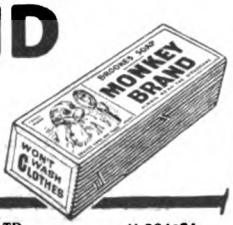

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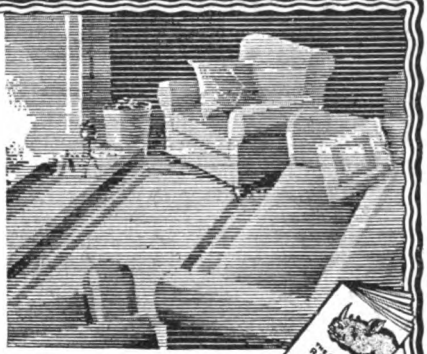

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GOOD fellowship— — Jollity — Plum puddings—Gifts!

Remember the infinite possibilities of "RHINOS" when cudgelling your brains over the annual problem of suitable presents.

Everything—from Motor Car Upholstery or suites of furniture to the tiniest Match Case, calls for the use of "RHINOS."

Believing in the excellence of leather, but thinking it rather too expensive in its natural state, we have made "RHINOS" from real leather, but with the added advantages of being waterproof, uniform in width and colour, and much less costly.

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CHRISTMAS 1926

This gift cabinet is sure to be appreciated

YOU know the quality of "Basildon Bond" writing paper—clean and crisp as a £5 note. The handsome "Basildon Bond" Stationery Cabinet, illustrated above, is one of the most useful of Christmas Gifts, and is always highly appreciated.

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60 *Sheets of Rex Fly Note.*
80 *Leaf Half Rex Pad.*
100 *Tissue Lined Envelopes to match.*
25 *Correspondence Cards, Gilt Edge, Round Corner.*
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Propelling Pencil and Pen Holder.

PRICE
10/6

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Get one to-day.

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One drop from the perfuming rod attached to the stopper spreads a wealth of fragrance, adding to a woman's natural charm the air of distinction and individuality.

In all flower scents.
Specially recommended :—
Lily "C.C." and
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Daintily presented in a silk-lined case.

3/9, 10/6, 20/- per vial.

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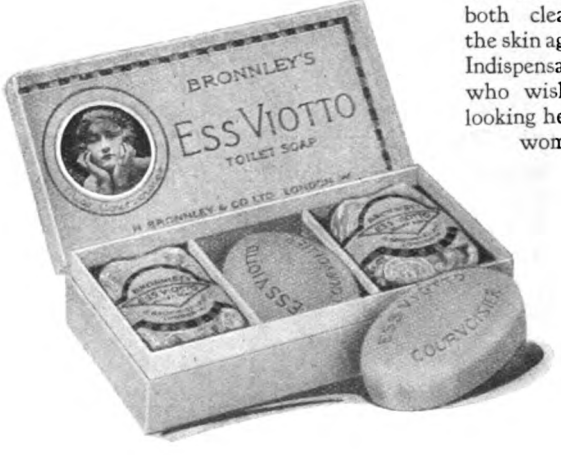
The delightful soap of unsurpassed quality that gives a sense of grateful freshness and comfort after its use; both cleanses and soothes the skin against winter winds. Indispensable to the woman who wishes to feel she is looking her best. And what woman does not?



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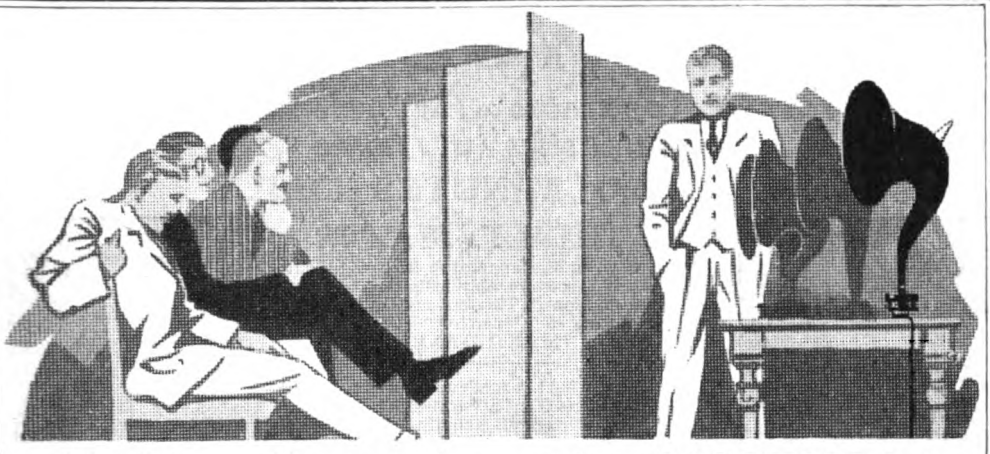

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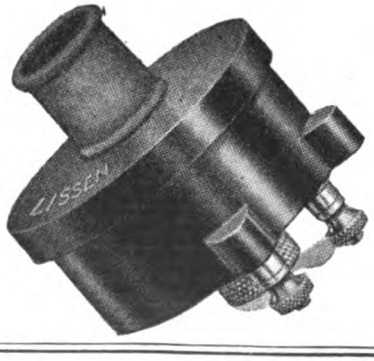

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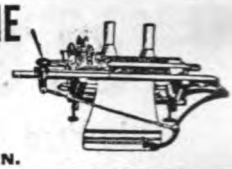

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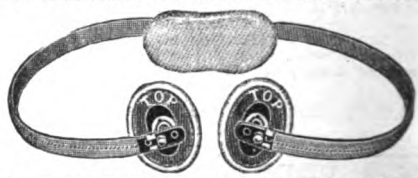

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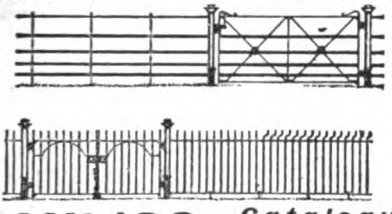

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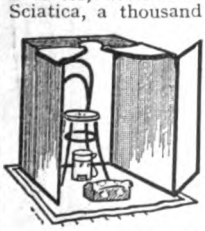

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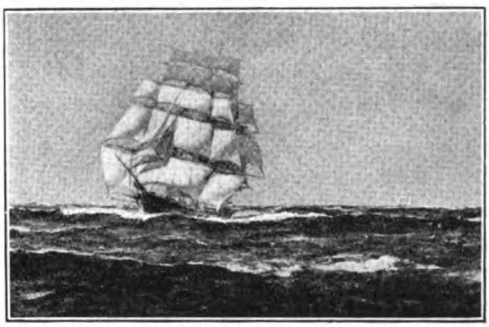

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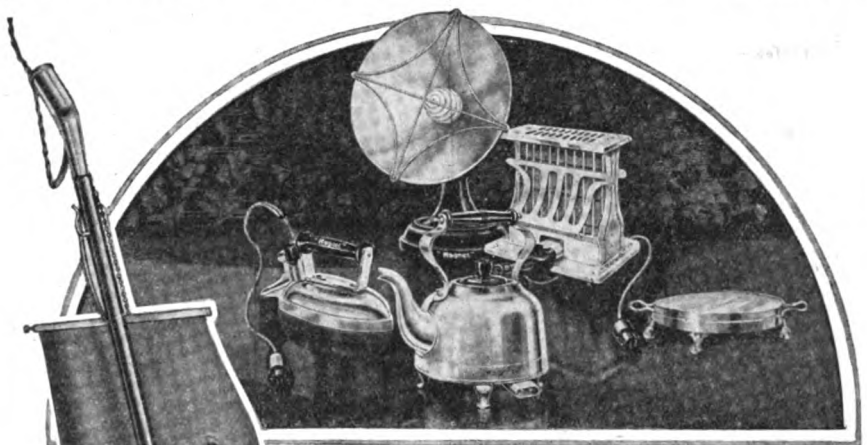

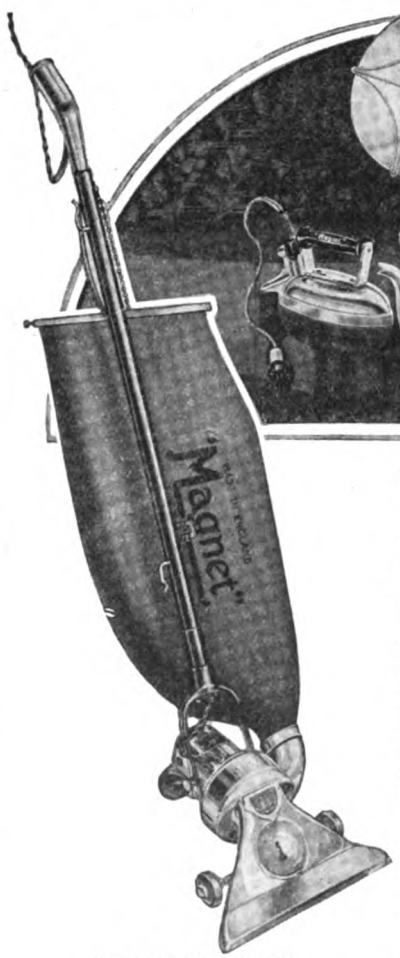

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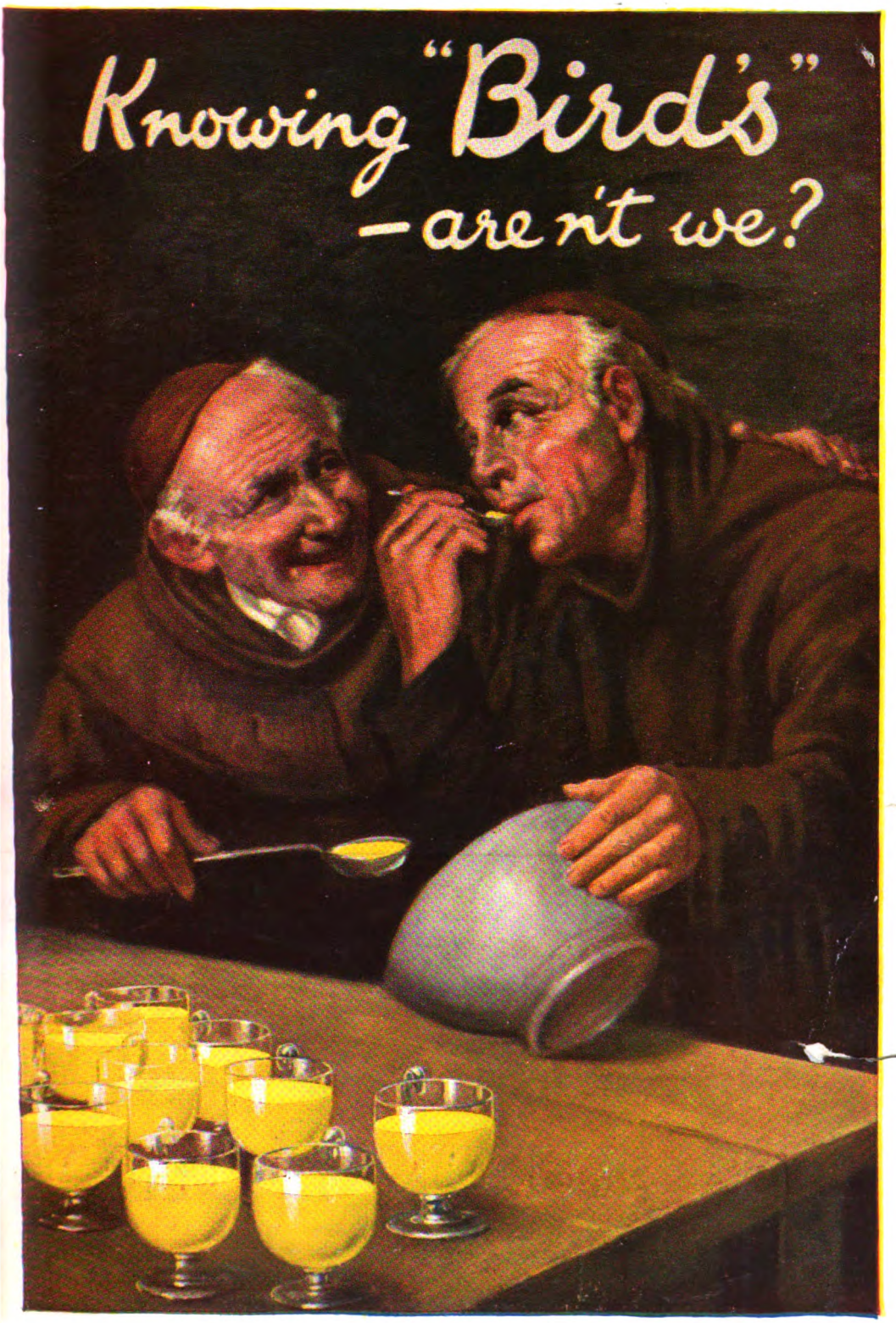
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Ever so high !

¶ Mother—the health doctor — knows there are disease germs wherever there's dust or dirt. That's why there's Lifebuoy at every place where hands are washed — she uses it for home cleaning, too.

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All this seriously affects your health. Especially sensitive to these conditions, the liver and kidneys become tired and sluggish. Failing to function actively they allow impurities to creep into the blood. Headaches, sleepiness after meals, depression, and rheumatism, gloomy spirits and other ills follow. In other words, you are not well. You need a corrective. You need Kruschen Salts.

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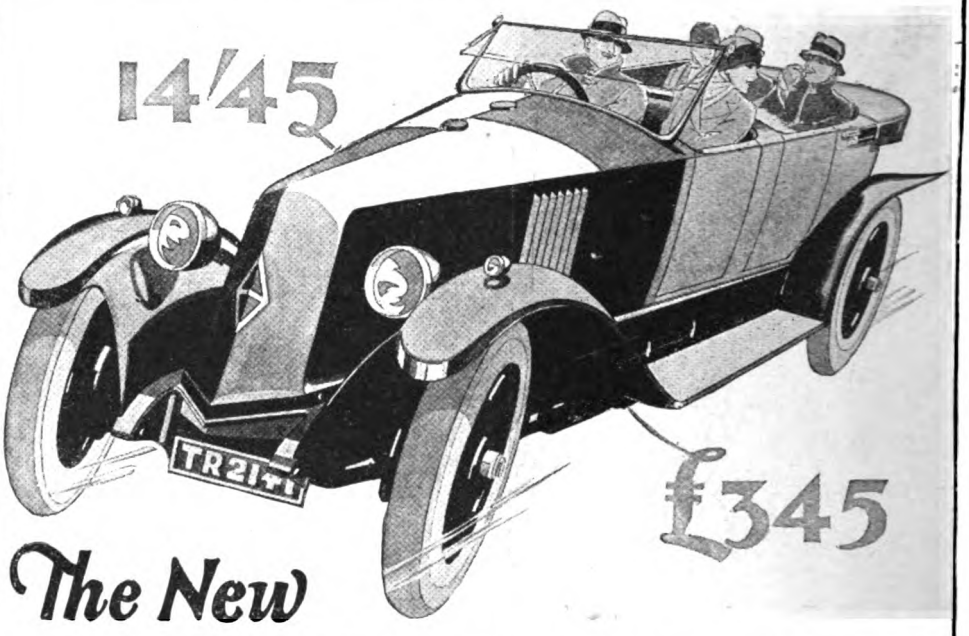

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Abridged Specification.

14/45 *Four cylinder. Tax £14. Detachable cylinder head. Radiator behind engine. Twin jet carburetter. Dynastart 12 volt starting and lighting. Four wheel internal expanding brakes. Five wheels and tyres. Full equipment.*

MODELS: 5-seater Standard torpedo, £345. 5-seater English torpedo, £395. 4-door Fabric saloon, £405.

The design of the Renault bonnet renders the engine very accessible for routine attention.

9/15 *Four cylinder. Tax £9. Detachable cylinder head, centrifugal pressure lubrication. Twin jet carburetter. Dynastart 12 volt lighting and starting. 3 speed floating gear box. 4 wheel brakes. 5 detachable steel disc wheels and tyres. Full equipment.* **£198**

MODELS: 4-seater torpedo, £198. 2-seater all-weather, with single dicky, £215. 2-door saloon, £235. Sports, £265.

Descriptive literature on request.

RENAULT LTD., *Showrooms*: 21, PALL MALL, S.W.1
('Phone: Regent 0974).

***Head Office & Works:* 42, SEAGRAVE RD., WEST BROMPTON, S.W.6**

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